

HISTORY
OF
EUROPEAN MORALS

FROM AUGUSTUS TO CHARLEMAGNE

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

LECKY'S *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne* was first published in 1869. In the *History of Rationalism* he had dealt mainly with modern Europe. In the new work he turned his attention to a period roughly corresponding to that covered by Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

To some extent Lecky's treatment of the respective characteristics of pagan and Christian ethics will bear comparison with Gibbon. Both writers, while doing justice to the fine side of paganism, as exemplified in the Stoic philosophy, recognise the fatal maladies—an economy based on slavery and a political system destructive of public spirit—which doomed the Roman Empire to destruction. Lecky's treatment of Christianity lacks the inimitable irony of Gibbon's famous fifteenth and sixteenth chapters, and in the judgment of many Rationalists makes unwarrantable concessions to the new religion. But his handling of Christian miracles is such as his *History of Rationalism* would lead us to expect, and his exposition of the natural causes which led to the victory of Christianity is quite on the lines of his great predecessor. As to the effects of that victory, Lecky points out that "the golden age of Roman law was not Christian, but pagan," that under the Christian emperors "the number of capital offences became considerably greater than before," and that the legislative alleviations of slavery, often supposed to be characteristic of the Christian régime, were in fact "extremely slight." On the other hand, we have the morbid growth of asceticism, the cult of poverty and dirt, the negation of natural affection, and the rest of that blasphemy against life of which Lecky gives revolting and well-documented particulars. By the close of the period with which he deals, religion "was a question of munificence to monasteries," and the heroes of ecclesiastical historians were men who combined unmitigated ruffianism and treachery with a politic aggrandisement of the Catholic hierarchy.

Like the *History of Rationalism*, the *History of European Morals* inevitably "dates." At the time when it was written, few recognised that morals were subject to evolution. Lecky's preliminary chapter, in which he attacks the utilitarians and argues for an intuitive basis of morals independent of time and place, will strike many readers as antiquated. But his merits outweigh his limitations. In our day militant reaction is busy attributing all our difficulties to the decay of religious belief and inviting us to return to medieval orthodoxy. Lecky serves a purpose by helping us to see exactly what that orthodoxy was, and so enables us to avoid the trap.

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.

January 1, 1946.

PREFACE

THE question with which an historian of Morals is chiefly concerned are the changes that have taken place in the moral standard and in the moral type. By the first, I understand the degrees in which, in different ages, recognised virtues have been enjoined and practised. By the second, I understand the relative importance that in different ages has been attached to different virtues. Thus, for example, a Roman of the age of Pliny, an Englishman of the age of Henry VIII., and an Englishman of our own day, would all agree in regarding humanity as a virtue, and its opposite as a vice; but their judgments of the acts which are compatible with a humane disposition would be widely different. A humane man of the first period might derive a keen enjoyment from those gladiatorial games which an Englishman, even in the days of the Tudors, would regard as atrociously barbarous; and this last would, in his turn, acquiesce in many sports which would now be emphatically condemned. And, in addition to this change of standard, there is a continual change in the order of precedence which is given to virtues. Patriotism, chastity, charity, and humility are examples of virtues, each of which has in some ages been brought forward as of the most supreme and transcendent importance, and the very basis of a virtuous character, and in other ages been thrown into the background and reckoned among the minor graces of a noble life. The heroic virtues, the amiable virtues, and what are called more especially the religious virtues, form distinct groups, to which, in different periods, different degrees of prominence have been

assigned; and the nature, causes, and consequences of these changes in the moral type are among the most important branches of history.

In estimating, however, the moral condition of an age, it is not sufficient to examine the ideal of moralists. It is necessary also to enquire how far that ideal has been realised among the people. The corruption of a nation is often reflected in the indulgent and selfish ethics of its teachers; but it sometimes produces a reaction, and impels the moralist to an asceticism which is the extreme opposite of the prevailing spirit of society. The means which moral teachers possess of acting upon their fellows, vary greatly in their nature and efficacy, and the age of the highest moral teaching is often not that of the highest general level of practice. Sometimes we find a kind of aristocracy of virtue, exhibiting the most refined excellence in their teaching and in their actions, but exercising scarcely any appreciable influence upon the mass of the community. Sometimes we find moralists of a much less heroic order, whose influence has permeated every section of society. In addition, therefore, to the type and standard of morals inculcated by the teachers, an historian must investigate the realised morals of the people.

The three questions I have now briefly indicated are those which I have especially regarded in examining the moral history of Europe between Augustus and Charlemagne. As a preliminary to this enquiry I have discussed at some length the rival theories concerning the nature and obligations of morals, and have also endeavoured to show what virtues are

especially appropriate to each successive stage of civilisation, in order that we may afterwards ascertain to what extent the natural evolution has been affected by special agencies. I have then followed the moral history of the Pagan Empire, reviewing the Stoical, the Eclectic, and the Egyptian philosophies that in turn flourished, showing in what respects they were the products or expressions of the general condition of society, tracing their influence in many departments of legislation and literature, and investigating the causes of the deep-seated corruption which baffled all the efforts of emperors and philosophers. The triumph of the Christian religion in Europe next demands our attention. In treating this subject I have endeavoured, for the most part, to exclude all considerations of a purely theological or controversial character, all discussions concerning the origin of the faith in Palestine, and concerning the first type of its doctrine, and to regard the Church simply as a moral agent exercising its influence in Europe. Confining myself within these limits, I have examined the manner in which the circumstances of the Pagan Empire impeded or assisted its growth, the nature of the opposition it had to encounter, the transformations it underwent under the influence of prosperity, of the ascetic enthusiasm, and of the barbarian invasions, and the many ways in which it determined the moral condition of society. The growing sense of the sanctity of human life, the history of charity, the formation of the legends of the hagiology, the effects of asceticism upon civic and domestic virtues, the moral influence of monasteries, the ethics of the intellect, the virtues and vices of the decaying Christian Empire and of the barbarian kingdoms that replaced it, the gradual apotheosis of secular rank, and the first stages of that military Christianity which attained its climax at the Crusades, have been all discussed with more or less detail, and I have concluded my work by reviewing the changes that

have taken place in the position of women, and in the moral questions connected with the relations of the sexes.

In investigating these numerous subjects it has occasionally, though rarely, happened that my path has intersected that which I have pursued in a former work, and in two or three instances I have not hesitated to repeat facts to which I had there briefly referred. I have thought that such a course was preferable to presenting the subject shorn of some material incident, or to falling into what has always the appearance of an unpleasing egotism, by appealing unnecessarily to my own writings. Although the history of the period I have traced has never, so far as I am aware, been written from exactly the point of view which I have adopted, I have, of course, been for the most part moving over familiar ground, which has been often and ably investigated; and any originality that may be found in this work must lie, not so much in the facts which have been exhumed, as in the manner in which they have been grouped, and in the significance that has been ascribed to them. I have endeavoured to acknowledge the more important works from which I have derived assistance; and if I have not always done so, I trust the reader will ascribe it to the great multitude of the special histories relating to the subjects I have treated, to my unwillingness to overload my pages with too numerous references, and perhaps, in some cases, to the difficulty that all who have been much occupied with a single department of history must sometimes have, in distinguishing the ideas which have sprung from their own reflections from those which have been derived from books.

There is one writer, however, whom I must especially mention, for his name occurs continually in the following pages, and his memory has been more frequently, and in these latter months more sadly, present to my mind than any other. Brilliant and numerous as are the works of the late Dean Milman, it was those

only who had the great privilege of his friendship who could fully realise the amazing extent and variety of his knowledge; the calm, luminous, and delicate judgment which he carried into so many spheres; the inimitable grace and tact of his conversation, coruscating with the happiest anecdotes, and the brightest and yet the gentlest humour, and, what was perhaps more remarkable than any single faculty, the admirable harmony and symmetry of his mind and character, so free from all the disproportion, and eccentricity, and exaggeration that sometimes make even genius assume the form of a splendid disease. They can never forget those yet higher attributes, which rendered him so unspeakably reverend to all who knew him well—his fervent love of truth, his wide tolerance, his large, generous, and masculine judgments of men and things; his almost instinctive perception of the good that is latent in each opposing party, his disdain for the noisy triumphs and the fleeting popularity of mere sectarian strife, the fond and touching affection with which he dwelt upon the images of the past, combining, even in extreme old age, with the keenest and most hopeful insight into the progressive movements of his time, and with a rare power of winning the confidence

and reading the thoughts of the youngest about him. That such a writer should have devoted himself to the department of history which, more than any other, has been distorted by ignorance, puerility, and dishonesty, I conceive to be one of the happiest facts in English literature, and (though sometimes diverging from his views) in many parts of the following work I have largely availed myself of his researches.

I cannot conceal from myself that this book is likely to encounter much, and probably angry, contradiction from different quarters and on different grounds. It is strongly opposed to a school of moral philosophy which is at present extremely influential in England; and, in addition to the many faults that may be found in its execution, its very plan must make it displeasing to many. Its subject necessarily includes questions on which it is exceedingly difficult for an English writer to touch, and the portion of history with which it is concerned has been obscured by no common measure of misrepresentation and passion. I have endeavoured to carry into it a judicial impartiality, and I trust that the attempt, however imperfect, may not be wholly useless to my readers.

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ADVERTISEMENT TO THE THIRD EDITION

I HAVE availed myself of the interval since the last edition to subject this book to a minute and careful revision, removing such inaccuracies as I have been able myself to discover, as well as those which have been brought under my notice by reviewers or correspondents. I must especially acknowledge the great assistance I have derived in this task from my German translator, Dr. H. Jolowicz—now, unhappily, no more—one of the most conscientious and accurate scholars with whom I have ever been in communication. In the controversial part of the first chapter, which has given rise to a good deal of angry discussion, four or five lines which stood in the former editions have been omitted, and three or four short passages have been inserted, elucidating or supporting positions which have been misunderstood or contested.

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HISTORY OF EUROPEAN MORALS

PART I

CHAPTER I.

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF MORALS

A BRIEF enquiry into the nature and foundations of morals appears an obvious, and, indeed, almost an indispensable, preliminary to any examination of the moral progress of Europe. Unfortunately, however, such an enquiry is beset with serious difficulties, arising in part from the extreme multiplicity of detail which systems of moral philosophy present, and in part from a fundamental antagonism of principles, dividing them into two opposing groups. The great controversy, springing from the rival claims of intuition and utility to be regarded as the supreme regulator of moral distinctions, may be dimly traced in the division between Plato and Aristotle; it appeared more clearly in the division between the Stoics and the Epicureans; but it has only acquired its full distinction of definition, and the importance of the questions depending on it has only been fully appreciated, in modern times, under the influence of such writers as Cudworth, Clarke, and Butler upon the one side, and Hobbes, Helvétius, and Bentham on the other.

Independently of the broad intellectual difficulties which must be encountered in treating this question, there is a difficulty of a personal kind, which it may be advisable at once to meet. There is a disposition in some moralists to resent, as an imputation against their own characters, any charge of immoral consequences that may be brought against the principles they advocate. Now it is a peculiarity of this controversy that every moralist is compelled, by the very nature

of the case, to bring such charges against the opinions of his opponents. The business of a moral philosophy is to account for and to justify our moral sentiments, or, in other words, to show how we come to have our notions of duty, and to supply us with a reason for acting upon them. If it does this adequately, it is impregnable, and therefore a moralist who repudiates one system is called upon to show that, according to its principles, the notion of duty, or the motives for performing it, could never have been generated. The Utilitarian accuses his opponent of basing the entire system of morals on a faculty that has no existence, of adopting a principle that would make moral duty vary with the latitude and the epoch, of resolving all ethics into an idle sentiment. The intuitive moralist, for reasons I shall hereafter explain, believes that the Utilitarian theory is profoundly immoral. But to suppose that either of these charges extends to the character of the moralist is altogether to misconceive the position which moral theories actually hold in life. Our moral sentiments do not flow from, but long precede, our ethical systems; and it is usually only after our characters have been fully formed that we begin to reason about them. It is both possible and very common for the reasoning to be very defective, without any corresponding imperfection in the disposition of the man.

The two rival theories of morals are known by many names, and are subdivided into many groups. One of them

is generally described as the stoical, the intuitive, the independent or the sentimental; the other as the epicurean, the inductive, the utilitarian, or the selfish. The moralists of the former school, to state their opinions in the broadest form, believe that we have a natural power of perceiving that some qualities, such as benevolence, chastity, or veracity, are better than others, and that we ought to cultivate them, and to repress their opposites. In other words, they contend, that by the constitution of our nature, the notion of right carries with it a feeling of obligation; that to say a course of conduct is our duty, is in itself, and apart from all consequences, an intelligible and sufficient reason for practising it; and that we derive the first principles of our duties from intuition. The moralist of the opposite school denies that we have any such natural perception. He maintains that we have by nature absolutely no knowledge of merit and demerit, of the comparative excellence of our feelings and actions, and that we derive these notions solely from an observation of the course of life which is conducive to human happiness. That which makes actions good is, that they increase the happiness or diminish the pains of mankind. That which constitutes their demerit is their opposite tendency. To procure "the greatest happiness for the greatest number" is therefore the highest aim of the moralist, the supreme type and expression of virtue.

It is manifest, however, that this last school, if it proceeded no further than I have stated, would have failed to accomplish the task which every moralist must undertake. It is easy to understand that experience may show that certain actions are conducive to the happiness of mankind, and that these actions may in consequence be regarded as supremely excellent. The question still remains, why we are bound to perform them. If men, who believe that virtuous actions are those which experience shows to be useful to society, believe also that they are under a natural obligation to seek the happiness of others, rather than their own, when the two interests conflict, they have certainly no claim to the title of inductive moralists. They recognise a moral faculty, or natural sense of moral obligation or duty, as truly as Butler or as Cudworth. And, indeed, a position very similar to this has been adopted by

several intuitive moralists. Thus Hutcheson, who is the very founder in modern times of the doctrine of "a moral sense," and who has defended the disinterested character of virtue more powerfully than perhaps any other moralist, resolved all virtue into benevolence, or the pursuit of the happiness of others; but he maintained that the excellence and obligation of benevolence are revealed to us by a "moral sense." Hume, in like manner, pronounced utility to be the criterion and essential element of all virtue, and is so far undoubtedly a Utilitarian: but he asserted also that our pursuit of virtue is unselfish, and that it springs from a natural feeling of approbation or disapprobation distinct from reason, and produced by a peculiar sense, or taste, which rises up within us at the contemplation of virtue or of vice.¹ A similar doctrine has more recently been advocated by Mackintosh. It is supposed by many that it is a complete description of the Utilitarian system of morals, that it judges all actions and dispositions by their consequences, pronouncing them moral in proportion to their tendency to promote, immoral in proportion to their tendency to diminish, the happiness of man. But such a summary is clearly inadequate, for it deals only with one of the two questions which every moralist must answer. A theory of morals must explain not only what constitutes a duty,

¹ The opinions of Hume on moral questions are grossly misrepresented by many writers, who persist in describing them as substantially identical with those of Bentham. How far Hume was from denying the existence of a moral sense the following passages will show: "The final sentence, it is probable, which pronounces characters and actions amiable or odious, praiseworthy or blameable depends on some internal sense or feeling which nature has made universal in the whole species." (*Enquiry concerning Morals*, § 1.) "The hypothesis we embrace... defines virtue to be whatever mental action or quality gives to the spectator the pleasing sentiment of approbation." (*Ibid.*, Appendix 1) "The crime or immorality is no particular fact or relation which can be the object of the understanding, but arises entirely from the sentiment of disapprobation, which, by the structure of human nature, we unavoidably feel on the apprehension of barbarity or treachery." (*Ibid.*) "Reason instructs us in the several tendencies of actions, and humanity makes a distinction in favour of those which are useful and beneficial." (*Ibid.*) "As virtue is an end, and is desirable on its own account without fee or reward, merely for the immediate satisfaction it conveys, it is requisite that there should be some sentiment which it touches, some internal taste or feeling, or whatever you please to call it, which distinguishes moral good and evil, and which embraces the one and rejects the other" (*Ibid.*) The two writers to whom Hume was most indebted were Hutcheson and Butler. In some interesting letters to the former (*Burton's Life of Hume*, vol. i.), he discusses the points on which he differed from them.

but also how we obtain the notion of there being such a thing as duty. It must tell us not merely what is the course of conduct we *ought* to pursue, but also what is the meaning of this word "ought," and from what source we derive the idea it expresses.

Those who have undertaken to prove that all our morality is a product of experience, have not shrunk from this task, and have boldly entered upon the one path that was open to them. The notion of there being any such feeling as an original sense of obligation distinct from the anticipation of pleasure or pain, they treat as a mere illusion of the imagination. All that is meant by saying we ought to do an action is, that if we do not do it, we shall suffer. A desire to obtain happiness and to avoid pain is the only possible motive to action. The reason, and the only reason, why we should perform virtuous actions, or, in other words, seek the good of others, is that on the whole such a course will bring us the greatest amount of happiness.

We have here then a general statement of the doctrine which bases morals upon experience. If we ask what constitutes virtuous, and what vicious actions, we are told that the first are those which increase the happiness or diminish the pains of mankind; and the second are those which have the opposite effect. If we ask what is the motive to virtue, we are told that it is an enlightened self-interest. The words happiness, utility, and interest include, however, many different kinds of enjoyment, and have given rise to many different modifications of the theory.

Perhaps the lowest and most repulsive form of this theory is that which was propounded by Mandeville, in his *Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue*.¹ According to this writer, virtue sprang in

the first instance from the cunning of rulers. These, in order to govern men, found it necessary to persuade them that it was a noble thing to restrain, instead of indulging their passions, and to devote themselves entirely to the good of the community. The manner in which they attained this end was by acting upon the feeling of vanity. They persuaded men that human nature was something nobler than the nature of animals, and that devotion to the community rendered a man pre-eminently great. By statues, and titles, and honours; by continually extolling such men as Regulus or Decius; by representing those who were addicted to useless enjoyments as a low and despicable class, they at last so inflamed the vanity of men as to kindle an intense emulation, and inspire the most heroic actions. And soon new influences came into play. Men who began by restraining their passions, in order to acquire the pleasure of the esteem of others, found that this restraint saved them from many painful consequences that would have naturally ensued from over-indulgence, and this discovery became a new motive to virtue. Each member of the community, moreover, found that he himself derived benefit from the self-sacrifice of others, and also that when he was seeking his own interest, without regard to others, no persons stood so much in his way as those who were similarly employed, and he had thus a double reason for diffusing abroad the notion of the excellence of self-sacrifice. The result of all this was that men agreed to stigmatise under the term "vice" whatever was injurious, and to eulogise as "virtue" whatever was beneficial to society.

The opinions of Mandeville attracted, when they were published, an attention greatly beyond their intrinsic merit, but they are now sinking rapidly into deserved oblivion. The author, in a poem called *The Fable of the Bees*, and in comments attached to it, himself advocated a thesis altogether inconsistent with that I have described, maintaining that "private vices were public benefits," and endeavouring, in a long series of very feeble and sometimes very grotesque arguments, to prove that vice was in the highest degree beneficial to mankind. A far greater writer had, however, already framed a scheme of morals which, if somewhat less repulsive, was in no degree less selfish than that of Mandeville; and the opinions of Hobbes

¹ "The chief thing therefore which lawgivers and other wise men that have laboured for the establishment of society have endeavoured, has been to make the people they were to govern believe that it was more beneficial for everybody to conquer than to indulge his appetites, and much better to mind the public than what seemed his private interest. Observing that none were either so savage as not to be charmed with praise, or so despicable as patiently to bear contempt, they justly concluded that flattery must be the most powerful argument that could be used to human creatures. Making use of this bewitching engine, they extolled the excellency of our nature above other animals by the help of which we were capable of performing the most noble achievements. Having, by this artful flattery, insinuated themselves into the hearts of men, they began to instruct them in the notions of honour and shame, &c." (*Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue*.)

concerning the essence and origin of virtue, have, with no very great variations, been adopted by what may be termed the narrower school of Utilitarians.

According to these writers we are governed exclusively by our own interest.¹ Pleasure, they assure us, is the only good,² and moral good and moral evil mean nothing more than our voluntary conformity to a law that will bring it to us.³ To love good simply as good, is impossible.⁴ When we speak of the goodness of God, we mean only His goodness to us.⁵ Reverence is nothing more than

our conviction, that one who has power to do us both good and harm, will only do us good.¹ The pleasures of piety arise from the belief that we are about to receive pleasure, and the pains of piety from the belief that we are about to suffer pain, from the Deity.² Our very affections, according to some of these writers, are all forms of self-love. Thus charity springs partly from our desire to obtain the esteem of others, partly from the expectation that the favours we have bestowed will be reciprocated, and partly, too, from the gratification of the sense of power, by the proof that we can satisfy not only our own desires but also the desires of others.³ Pity is an emotion arising from a vivid realisation of sorrow that may befall ourselves, suggested by the sight of the sorrows of others. We pity especially those who have not deserved calamity, because we consider ourselves to belong to that category; and the spectacle of suffering against which no foresight could provide, reminds us most forcibly of what may happen to ourselves.⁴ Friendship is the sense

¹ "I conceive that when a man deliberates whether he shall do a thing or not do it, he does nothing else but consider whether it be better for himself to do it or not to do it." (Hobbes, *On Liberty and Necessity*) "Good and evil are names that signify our appetites and aversions." (*Ibid.*, *Leviathan*, part 1, ch. xv) "Obligation is the necessity of doing or omitting any action in order to be happy." (Gay's dissertation prefixed to King's *Origin of Evil*, p. 36) "The only reason or motive by which individuals can possibly be induced to the practice of virtue must be the feeling immediate or the prospect of future private happiness." (Brown, *On the Characteristics*, p. 159.) "En tout temps, en tout lieu, tant en matière de morale qu'en matière d'esprit, c'est l'intérêt personnel qui dicte le jugement des particuliers, et l'intérêt général qui dicte celui des nations. Tout homme ne prend dans ses jugements conseil que de son intérêt." (Helvétius, *De l'Esprit*, discours ii.) "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. The principle of utility recognises this subjection, and assumes it for the foundation of that system the object of which is to rear the fabric of felicity by the hands of reason and of law. Systems which attempt to question it deal in sounds instead of sense, in caprice instead of reason, in darkness instead of light." (Bentham's *Principles of Morals and Legislation*, ch. 1.) "By the principle of utility is meant that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question." (*Ibid.*) "Je regarde l'amour éclairé de nous-mêmes comme le principe de tout sacrifice moral." (D'Alembert, quoted by D. Stewart, *Active and Moral Powers*, vol. 1, p. 220.)

² "Pleasure is in itself a good; nay, even, setting aside immunity from pain, the only good; pain is in itself an evil, and, indeed, without exception, the only evil, or else the words good and evil have no meaning." (Bentham's *Principles of Morals and Legislation*, ch. x.)

³ "Good and evil are nothing but pleasure and pain, or that which occasions or procures pleasure or pain to us. Moral good and evil then is only the conformity or disagreement of our voluntary actions to some law whereby good or evil is drawn on us by the will and power of the law-maker, which good and evil, pleasure or pain, attending our observance or breach of the law by the decree of the law-maker, is that we call reward or punishment." (Locke's *Essay*, book ii, ch. xxvii.) "Take away pleasures and pains, not only happiness, but justice, and duty, and obligation, and virtue, all of which have been so elaborately held up to view as independent of them, are so many empty sounds." (Bentham's *Springs of Action*, ch. i § 15.)

⁴ "Il lui est aussi impossible d'aimer le bien pour le bien, que d'aimer le mal pour le mal." (Helvétius, *De l'Esprit*, disc. ii, ch. v.)

⁵ "Even the goodness which we apprehend in God Almighty is His goodness to us." (Hobbes, *On Human*

Nature, ch. vii, § 3.) So Waterland, "To love God is in effect the same thing as to love happiness, eternal happiness; and the love of happiness is still the love of ourselves." (*Third Sermon on Self-love*)

¹ "Reverence is the conception we have concerning another, that he hath the power to do unto us both good and hurt, but not the will to do us hurt." (Hobbes, *On Human Nature*, ch. vii, § 7.)

² "The pleasures of piety are the pleasures that accompany the belief of a man's being in the acquisition, or in possession of the goodwill or favour of the Supreme Being, and as a fruit of it, of his being in the way of enjoying pleasures to be received by God's special appointment either in this life or in a life to come." (Bentham's *Principles of Morals and Legislation*, ch. v.) "The pains of piety are the pains that accompany the belief of a man's being obnoxious to the displeasure of the Supreme Being, and in consequence to certain pains to be inflicted by His especial appointment, either in this life or in a life to come. These may be also called the pains of religion." (*Ibid.*)

³ "There can be no greater argument to a man of his own power than to find himself able not only to accomplish his own desires, but also to assist other men in theirs; and this is that conception wherein consisteth charity." (Hobbes, *On Hum. Nat.*, ch. ix, § 17.) "No man giveth but with intention of good to himself, because gitt is voluntary; and of all voluntary acts, the object to every man is his own good." (Hobbes' *Leviathan*, part 1, ch. xv.) "Dream not that men will move their little finger to serve you, unless their advantage in so doing be obvious to them. Men never did so, and never will while human nature is made of its present materials." (Bentham's *Deontology*, vol. ii, p. 133.)

⁴ "Pity is imagination or fiction of future calamity to ourselves, proceeding from the sense of another man's calamity. But when it lighteth on such as we think have not deserved the same, the compassion is greater, because there then appeareth more probability that the same may happen to us; for the evil that happeneth to an innocent man may happen to every man." (Hobbes, *On Hum. Nat.*, ch. ix, § 10.) "La pitié est souvent un sentiment de nos propres maux

of the need of the person befriended¹

From such a conception of human nature it is easy to divine what system of morals must flow. No character, feeling, or action is naturally better than others, and as long as men are in a savage condition, morality has no existence. Fortunately, however, we are all dependent for many of our pleasures upon others. Co-operation and organisation are essential to our happiness, and these are impossible without some restraint being placed upon our appetites. Laws are enacted to secure this restraint, and being sustained by rewards and punishments, they make it the interest of the individual to regard that of the community. According to Hobbes, the disposition of man is so anarchical, and the importance of restraining it so transcendent, that absolute government alone is good; the commands of the sovereign are supreme, and must therefore constitute the law of morals. The other moralists of the school, though repudiating this notion, have given a very great and distinguished place to legislation in their schemes of ethics; for all our conduct being determined by our interests, virtue being simply the conformity of our own interests with those of the community, and a judicious legislation being the chief way of securing this conformity, the functions of the moralist and of the legislator are almost identical.² But in addition to the

rewards and punishments of the penal code, those arising from public opinion—fame or infamy, the friendship or hostility of those about us—are enlisted on the side of virtue. The educating influence of laws, and the growing perception of the identity of interests of the different members of the community, create a public opinion favourable to all the qualities which are "the means of peaceable, sociable, and comfortable living."³ Such are justice, gratitude, modesty, equity, and mercy, and such, too, are purity and chastity, which, considered in themselves alone, are in no degree more excellent than the coarsest and most indiscriminate lust, but which can be shown to be conducive to the happiness of society, and become in consequence virtues.⁴ This education of public opinion grows continually stronger with civilisation, and gradually moulds the characters of men, making them more and more disinterested, heroic, and unselfish. A disinterested, unselfish, and heroic man, it is explained, is one who is strictly engrossed in the pursuit of his own pleasure, but who pursues it in such a manner as to include in its gratification the happiness of others.⁵

science même de la législation." (Hévétius, *De l'Esprit*, n. 17.)

¹ This doctrine is expounded at length in all the moral works of Hobbes and his school. The following passage is a fair specimen of their meaning. "Moral philosophy is nothing else but the science of what is good and evil in the conversation and society of mankind. Good and evil are names that signify our appetites and aversions, which in different tempers, customs, and doctrines of men are different from whence arise disputes, controversies, and at last war. And therefore, so long as man is in this condition of mere nature (which is a condition of war), his private appetite is the measure of good and evil. And consequently all men agree in this, that peace is good and therefore also that the ways or means of peace, which (as I have showed before) are justice, gratitude, modesty, equity, mercy, and the rest of the laws of nature, are good and their contrary vices evil" (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, part i. ch. xv). See, too, a striking passage in Bentham's *Deontology*, vol. ii. p. 132.

² As an ingenious writer in the *Saturday Review* (Aug. 10, 1867) expresses it "Chastity is merely a social law created to encourage the alliances that most promote the permanent welfare of the race, and to maintain woman in a social position which it is thought advisable she should hold." See, too, on this view, Hume's *Enquiry concerning Morals*, § 4, and also note x: "To what other purpose do all the ideas of chastity and modesty serve? Nisi utile est quod facimus, frustra est gloria."

³ "All pleasure is necessarily self-regarding, for it is impossible to have any feelings out of our own mind. But there are modes of delight that bring also satisfaction to others, from the round that they take in their course. Such are the pleasures of benevolence. Others imply no participation by any second party, as, for example, eating, drinking, bodily warmth, property, and power, while a third class are tied by the pains and privations of fellow beings, as the delights of

dans les maux d'autrui. C'est une habile prévoyance des malheurs où nous pouvons tomber. Nous donnons des secours aux autres pour les engager à nous en donner en de semblables occasions, et ces services que nous leur rendons sont, à proprement parler, des biens que nous nous faisons à nous-mêmes par avance." (La Rochefoucauld, *Maximes*, 264.) Butler has remarked that if Hobbes' account were true, the most fearful would be the most compassionate nature, but this is perhaps not quite just, for Hobbes' notion of pity implies the union of two not absolutely identical, though nearly allied, influences, timidity and imagination. The theory of Adam Smith, though closely connected with, differs totally in consequences from that of Hobbes on this point. He says, "When I condole with you for the loss of your son, in order to enter into your grief, I do not consider what I, a person of such a character and profession, should suffer if I had a son, and if that son should die—I consider what I should suffer if I was really you. I not only change circumstances with you, but I change persons and characters. My grief, therefore, is entirely upon your account. A man may sympathise with a woman in child-bed, though it is impossible he should conceive himself suffering her pains in his own proper person and character." (*Moral Sentiments*, part vi. ch. i. § 3.)

⁴ "Ce que les hommes ont nommé amitié n'est qu'une société, qu'un ménagement réciproque d'intérêts et qu'un échange de bons offices. Ce n'est enfin qu'un commerce où l'amour-propre se propose toujours quelque chose à gagner." (La Rochefoucauld, *Max.* 82. See this idea developed at large in Hévétius.)

⁵ "La science de la morale n'est autre chose que la

It is a very old assertion, that a man who prudently sought his own interest would live a life of perfect virtue. This opinion is adopted by most of those Utilitarians who are least inclined to lay great stress upon religious motives; and as they maintain that every man necessarily pursues exclusively his own happiness, we return by another path to the old Platonic doctrine, that all vice is ignorance. Virtue is a judicious, and vice an injudicious, pursuit of pleasure. Virtue is a branch of prudence, vice is nothing more than imprudence or miscalculation.¹ He who seeks to improve the moral condition of mankind has two, and only two, ways of accomplishing his end. The first is, to make it more and more the interest of each to conform to that of the others; the second is, to dispel the ignorance which prevents men from seeing their true interest.² If chastity or truth, or any other of what we regard as virtues, could be shown to produce on the whole more pain than they destroy, or to deprive men of more pleasure than they afford, they would not be virtues, but vices.³ If

it could be shown that it is not for our own interest to practise any of what are admitted to be virtues, all obligation to practise them would immediately cease.⁴ The whole scheme of ethics may be evolved from the four canons of Epicurus. The pleasure which produces no pain is to be embraced. The pain which produces no pleasure is to be avoided. The pleasure is to be avoided which prevents a greater pleasure, or produces a greater pain. The pain is to be endured which averts a greater pain, or secures a greater pleasure.⁵

So far I have barely alluded to any but terrestrial motives. These, in the opinion of many of the most illustrious of the school, are sufficient, but others—as we shall see, I think, with great reason—are of a different opinion. Their obvious resource is in the rewards and punishments of another world, and these they accordingly present as the motive to virtue. Of all the modifications of the selfish theory, this alone can be said to furnish interested motives for virtue which are invariably and incontestably adequate. If men introduce the notion of infinite punishments and infinite rewards distributed by an omniscient Judge, they can undoubtedly supply stronger reasons for practising virtue than can ever be found for practising vice. While admitting, therefore, in emphatic terms, that any sacrifice of our pleasure, without the prospect of an equivalent reward, is a simple act of madness, and unworthy of a rational being,⁶ these writers maintain

sport and tyranny. The condemnatory phrase, selfishness, applies with especial emphasis to the last-mentioned class, and, in a qualified degree, to the second group, while such terms as unselfishness, disinterestedness, self-devotion, are applied to the vicarious position wherein we seek our own satisfaction in that of others." (Bain, *On the Emotions and Will*, p. 113.)

¹ "Vice may be defined to be a miscalculation of chances, a mistake in estimating the value of pleasures and pains. It is false moral arithmetic." (Bentham's *Deontology*, vol. i. p. 131.)

² "La récompense, la punition, la gloire et l'infamie soumises à ses volontés sont quatre espèces de divinités avec lesquelles le législateur peut toujours opérer le bien public et créer des hommes illustres en tous les genres. Toute l'étude des moralistes consiste à déterminer l'usage qu'on doit faire de ces récompenses et de ces punitions et les secours qu'on peut tirer pour leur intérêt personnel à l'intérêt général" (Helvétius, *De l'Esprit*, ii. 22.) "La justice de nos jugements et de nos actions n'est jamais que la rencontre heureuse de notre intérêt avec l'intérêt public." (*Ibid.* ii. 7.) "To prove that the immoral action is a miscalculation of self-interest, to show how erroneous an estimate the vicious man makes of pains and pleasures, is the purpose of the intelligent moralist. Unless he can do this he does nothing; for, as has been stated above, for a man not to pursue what he deems likely to produce to him the greatest sum of enjoyment is, in the very nature of things, impossible." (Bentham's *Deontology*.)

³ "If the effect of virtue were to prevent or destroy more pleasure than it produced, or to produce more pain than it prevented, its more appropriate name would be wickedness and folly; wickedness as it affected others, folly as respected him who practised it." (Bentham's *Deontology*, vol. i. p. 142.) "Weigh pains, weigh pleasures, and as the balance stands will stand the question of right and wrong." (*Ibid.* vol. i. p. 137.) "Moralis philosophia caput est, Faustine fili, ut scias quibus ad beatam vitam perveniri rationibus possit." (Apuleius, *Ad. Doct. Platonis*, ii.) "Atque ipsa utilitas, justi prope mater et æqui." (Horace, *Sat.* i. iii. 45.)

⁴ "We can be obliged to nothing but what we ourselves are to gain or lose something by, for nothing else can be 'violent motive' to us. As we should not be obliged to obey the laws or the magistrate unless rewards or punishments, pleasure or pain, somehow or other, depended upon our obedience, so neither should we, without the same reason, be obliged to do what is right, to practise virtue, or to obey the commands of God." (Paley's *Moral Philosophy*, book ii. ch. ii.)

⁵ See Gassendi, *Philosophia Epicuri Syntagma*. These four canons are a skilful condensation of the argument of Torquatus in Cicero, *De Fin.* i. 2. See, too, a very striking letter by Epicurus himself, given in his life by Diogenes Laertius.

⁶ "Sanus igitur non est, qui nulla spe majore proposita, his bonis quibus ceteri utuntur in vita, labores et cruciatus et miseras anteponat. Non alter his bonis presentibus abstinendum est quam si sint aliqua majora, propter quæ tanti sit et voluptates omittere et mala omnia sustinere." (Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* vi. 9.) Macaulay, in some youthful essays against the Utilitarian theory (which he characteristically described as "Not much more laughable than phrenology, and immeasurably more humane than cock-fighting"), maintains the theological form of selfishness in very strong terms. "What proposition is there respecting human nature which is absolutely and universally true? We know of only one, and that is not only true but identical, that men always act from self-interest."

that we may reasonably sacrifice the enjoyments of this life, because we shall be rewarded by far greater enjoyment in the next. To gain heaven and avoid hell should be the spring of all our actions,¹ and virtue is simply prudence extending its calculations beyond the grave.² This calculation is what we mean by the "religious motive."³ The belief that the nobility and excellence of virtue could incite us, was a mere delusion of the Pagans.⁴

(Review of Mill's *Essay on Government*) "Of this we may be sure, that the words 'greatest happiness' will never in any man's mouth mean more than the greatest happiness of others, which is consistent with what he thinks his own. This direction (Do as you would be done by) would be utterly unmeaning, as it actually is in Mr. Bentham's philosophy, unless it were accompanied by a sanction. In the Christian scheme accordingly it is accompanied by a sanction of immense force. To a man whose greatest happiness in this world is inconsistent with the greatest happiness of the greatest number is held out the prospect of an infinite happiness hereafter, from which he excludes himself by wronging his fellow-creatures here" (*Answer to the "Westminster Review's" Defence of Mill.*)

¹ "All virtue and piety are thus resolvable into a principle of self-love. It is what Scripture itself resolves them into by founding them upon faith in God's promises, and hope in things unseen. In this way it may be rightly said that there is no such thing as disinterested virtue. It is with reference to ourselves and for our own sakes that we love even God Himself." (Waterland, *Third Sermon on Self-love.*) "To risk the happiness of the whole duration of our being in any case whatever, were it possible, would be foolish" (Robert Hall's *Sermon on Modern Infidelity*). "In the moral system the means are virtuous practice; the end, 'happiness' (Warburton's *Divine Legation*, book ii. Appendix.)

² "There is always understood to be a difference between an act of prudence and an act of duty. Thus, if I distrusted a man who owed me a sum of money, I should reckon it an act of prudence to get another person bound with him, but I should hardly call it an act of duty. Now in what, you will ask, does the difference consist, inasmuch as, according to our account of the matter, both in the one case and the other, in acts of duty as well as acts of prudence, we consider solely what we ourselves shall gain or lose by the act? The difference, and the only difference, is this: that in the one case we consider what we shall gain or lose in the present world; in the other case we consider also what we shall gain or lose in the world to come" (Paley's *Moral Philosophy*, i. 3.)

³ "Hence we may see the weakness and mistake of those falsely religious who are scandalised at our being determined to the pursuit of virtue through any degree of regard to its happy consequences in this life. For it is evident that the religious motive is precisely of the same kind, only stronger, as the happiness expected is greater and more lasting." (Brown's *Essays on the Characteristics*, p. 220.)

⁴ "If a Christian, who has the view of happiness and misery in another life, be asked why a man must keep his word, he will give this as a reason: because God, who has the power of eternal life and death, requires it of us. But if an Hobbiist be asked why, he will answer: because the public requires it, and the Levathan will punish you if you do not. And if one of the old heathen philosophers had been asked, he would have answered: because it was dishonest, below the dignity of man, and opposite to virtue, the highest perfection of human nature, to do otherwise." (Locke's *Essay*, i. 3.)

Considered simply in the light of a prudential scheme, there are only two possible objections that could be brought against this theory. It might be said that the amount of virtue required for entering heaven was not defined, and that therefore it would be possible to enjoy some vices on earth with impunity. To this, however, it is answered that the very indefiniteness of the requirement renders zealous piety a matter of prudence, and also that there is probably a graduated scale of rewards and punishments adapted to every variety of merit and demerit.¹ It might be said too that present pleasures are at least certain, and that those of another world are not equally so. It is answered that the rewards and punishments offered in another world are so transcendently great that, according to the rules of ordinary prudence, if there were only a probability, or even a bare possibility, of their being real, a wise man should regulate his course with a view to them.²

Among these writers, however, some have diverged to a certain degree from the broad stream of utilitarianism, declaring that the foundation of the moral law is not utility, but the will or arbitrary decree of God. This opinion, which was propounded by the schoolman Ockham, and by several other writers of his age,³ has in modern times found many adherents,⁴ and been defended through a variety of motives. Some have upheld it on the

¹ Thus Paley remarks that "The Christian religion hath not ascertained the precise quantity of virtue necessary to salvation." And he then proceeds to urge the probability of graduated scales of rewards and punishments (*Moral Philosophy*, book i. ch. vii.)

² This view was developed by Locke (*Essay on the Human Understanding*, book ii. ch. xvi.) Pascal, in a well-known passage, applied the same argument to Christianity, urging that the rewards and punishments it promises are so great that it is the part of a wise man to embrace the creed, even though he believes it improbable, if there be but a possibility in its favour.

³ Cudworth, in his *Immutable Morals*, has collected the names of a number of the schoolmen who held this view. See, too, an interesting note in Miss Cobbe's very learned *Essay on Intuitive Morals*, pp. 18, 19.

⁴ E.g., Soame Jenyns, Dr. Johnson, Crusius, Pascal, Paley, and Austin Warburton is generally quoted in the list, but not, I think, quite fairly. See his theory, which is rather complicated (*Divine Legation*, i. 3). Waterland appears to have held this view, and also Condillac. See a very remarkable chapter on morals in his *Traité des Animaux*, part ii. ch. vii. Closely connected with this doctrine is the notion that the morality of God is generically different from the morality of men, which, having been held with more or less distinctness by many theologians (Archbishop King being perhaps the most prominent), has found in our own day an able defender in Dr. Mansel. Much information on the history of this doctrine will be found in Dr. Mansel's *Second Letter to Professor Goldwin Smith* (Oxford, 1862).

philosophical ground that a law can be nothing but the sentence of a lawgiver; others from a desire to place morals in permanent subordination to theology; others in order to answer objections to Christianity derived from apparently immoral acts said to have been sanctioned by the Divinity; and others because, having adopted strong Calvinistic sentiments, they were at once profoundly opposed to utilitarian morals, and at the same time too firmly convinced of the total depravity of human nature to admit the existence of any trustworthy moral sense.¹

In the majority of cases, however, these writers have proved substantially utilitarians. When asked how we can know the will of God, they answer that in as far as it is not included in express revelation, it must be discovered by the rule of utility; for nature proves that the Deity is supremely benevolent, and desires the welfare of men, and therefore any conduct that leads to that end is in conformity with His will.² To the question why the Divine will should be obeyed, there are but two answers. The first, which is that of the intuitive moralist, is that we are under a natural obligation of gratitude to our Creator. The second, which is that of the selfish moralist, is that the Creator has infinite rewards and punishments at His disposal. The latter answer appears usually to have been adopted, and the most eminent member has summed up with great succinctness the opinion of his school. "The good of mankind," he says, "is the subject, the will of God the rule, and everlasting happiness the motive and end of all virtue."³

¹ Leibnitz noticed the frequency with which Supralapsarian Calvinists adopt this doctrine. (*Theodicee*, part ii. § 176.) Archbishop Whately, who from his connection with the Irish clergy had admirable opportunities of studying the tendencies of Calvinism, makes a similar remark as the result of his own experience. (*Whately's Life*, vol. ii. p. 339.)

² "God designs the happiness of all His sentient creatures.... Knowing the tendencies of our actions, and knowing His benevolent purposes, we know His tacit commands." (Austin's *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, vol. i. p. 31.) "The commands which He has revealed we must gather from the terms wherein they are promulgated. The commands which He has not revealed we must construe by the principle of utility." (*Ibid.* p. 56. So Paley's *Moral Philosophy*, book ii. ch. iv. v.)

³ Paley's *Moral Philosophy*, book i. ch. vii. The question of the disinterestedness of the love we should bear to God was agitated in the Catholic Church, Bossuet taking the selfish, and Fénelon the unselfish side. The opinions of Fénelon and Molinos on the subject were authoritatively condemned. In England, the less dogmatic character of the national faith, and also the fact that the great anti-Christian writer,

We have seen that the distinctive characteristic of the inductive school of moralists is an absolute denial of the existence of any natural or innate moral sense or faculty enabling us to distinguish between the higher and lower parts of our nature, revealing to us either the existence of a law of duty or the conduct that it prescribes. We have seen that the only postulate of these writers is that happiness, being universally desired, is a desirable thing, that the only merit they recognise in actions or feelings is their tendency to promote human happiness, and that the only motive to a virtuous act they conceive possible is the real or supposed happiness of the agent. The sanctions of morality thus constitute its obligation, and apart from them the word "ought" is absolutely unmeaning. Those sanctions, as we have considered them, are of different kinds and degrees of magnitude. Paley, though elsewhere acknowledging the others, regarded the religious one as so immeasurably the first, that he represented it as the one motive of virtue.¹ Locke divided them into Divine rewards and punishments, legal penalties and social penalties;² Bentham into physical, political, moral or popular, and religious—the first being the bodily evils that result from vice, the second the enactments of legislators, the third the pleasures and pains arising from social intercourse, the fourth the rewards and punishments of another world.³

During the greater part of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the controversy in England between those who derived the

Hobbes, was the advocate of extreme selfishness in morals, had, I think, a favourable influence upon the ethics of the Church. Hobbes gave the first great impulse to moral philosophy in England, and his opponents were naturally impelled to an unselfish theory. Bishop Cumberland led the way, resolving virtue (like Hutcheson) into benevolence. The majority of divines, however, till the present [the nineteenth] century, have, I think, been on the selfish side.

¹ *Moral Philosophy*, ii. 3.

² *Essay on the Human Understanding*, ii. 28.

³ *Principles of Morals and Legislation*, ch. iii. Mr. Mill observes that "Bentham's idea of the world is that of a collection of persons pursuing each his separate interest or pleasure, and the prevention of whom from jostling one another more than is unavoidable may be attempted by hopes and fears derived from three sources—the law, religion, and public opinion. To these three powers considered as binding human conduct, he gave the name of sanctions; the political sanction operating by the rewards and penalties of the law; the religious sanction by those expected from the ruler of the universe; and the popular, which he characteristically calls also the moral sanction, operating through the pains and pleasures arising from the favour or disfavour of our fellow-creatures" (*Dissertations* vol. i. pp. 362-363.)

moral code from experience and those who derived it from intuitions of the reason, or from a special faculty, or from a moral sense, or from the power of sympathy, turned mainly upon the existence of an unselfish element in our nature. The reality of this existence having been maintained by Shaftesbury, was established with an unprecedented, and I believe an irresistible, force by Hutcheson; and the same question occupies a considerable place in the writings of Butler, Hume, and Adam Smith. The selfishness of the school of Hobbes, though in some degree mitigated, may be traced in every page of the writings of Bentham; but some of his disciples have in this respect deviated very widely from their master, and in their hands the whole tone and complexion of utilitarianism have been changed.¹ The two means by which this transformation has been effected are the recognition of our unselfish or sympathetic feelings, and the doctrine of the association of ideas.

That human nature is so constituted that we naturally take a pleasure in the sight of the joy of others is one of those facts which to an ordinary observer might well appear among the most patent that can be conceived. We have seen, however, that it was emphatically denied by Hobbes, and during the greater part of the last century it was fashionable among writers of the school of Helvétius to endeavour to prove that all domestic or social affections were dictated simply by a need of the person who was beloved. The reality of the pleasures and pains of

sympathy was admitted by Bentham,² but, in accordance with the whole spirit of his philosophy, he threw them as much as possible into the background, and, as I have already noticed, gave them no place in his summary of the sanctions of virtue. The tendency, however, of the later members of the school has been to recognise them fully,³ though they differ as to the source from which they spring. According to one section our benevolent affections are derived from our selfish feelings by an association of ideas in a manner which I shall presently describe. According to the other, they are an original part of the constitution of our nature. However they be generated, their existence is admitted, their cultivation is a main object of morals, and the pleasure derived from their exercise a leading motive to virtue. The differences between the intuitive moralists and their rivals on this point are of two kinds. Both acknowledge the existence in human nature of both benevolent and malevolent feelings, and that we have a natural power of distinguishing one from the other; but the first maintain and the second deny that we have a natural power of perceiving that one is better than the other. Both admit that we enjoy a pleasure in acts of benevolence to others, but most writers of the first school maintain that that pleasure follows unsought for, while writers of the other school contend that the desire of obtaining it is the motive of the action.

But by far the most ingenious and at the same time most influential system of utilitarian morals is that which owes its distinctive feature to the doctrine of association of Hartley. This doctrine, which

¹ Hume on this, as on most other points, was emphatically opposed to the school of Hobbes, and even declared that no one could honestly and in good faith deny the reality of an unselfish element in man. Following in the steps of Butler, he explained it in the following passage: "Hunger and thirst have eating and drinking for their end, and from the gratification of these primary appetites, arises a pleasure which may become the object of another species of desire or inclination that is secondary and interested. In the same manner there are mental passions by which we are impelled immediately to seek particular objects, such as fame or power or vengeance, without any regard to interest, and when these objects are attained a pleasing enjoyment ensues. Now where is the difficulty of conceiving that this may likewise be the case with benevolence and friendship, and that from the original frame of our temper we may feel a desire of another's happiness or good, which by means of that affection becomes our own good, and is afterwards pursued, from the combined motives of benevolence and self-enjoyment?" (Hume's *Enquiry concerning Morals*, Appendix II.) Compare Butler: "If there be any appetite or any inward principle besides self-love, why may there not be an affection towards the good of our fellow-creatures, and delight from that affection's being gratified and uneasiness from things going contrary to it?" (*Sermon on Compassion*.)

² "By sympathetic sensibility is to be understood the propensity that a man has to derive pleasure from the happiness, and pain from the unhappiness, of other sensitive beings." (Bentham's *Principles of Morals and Legislation*, ch. vi.) "The sense of sympathy is universal. Perhaps there never existed a human being who had reached full age without the experience of pleasure at another's pleasure, of uneasiness at another's pain. . . Community of interests, similarity of opinion, are sources from whence it springs." (*D. ontology*, vol. i pp. 169-170.)

³ "The idea of the pain of another is naturally painful. The idea of the pleasure of another is naturally pleasurable. In this, the unselfish part of our nature, lies a foundation, even independently of inculcation from without, for the generation of moral feelings." (Mill's *Dissertations*, vol. i. p. 137.) See, too, Bain's *Emotions and the Will*, pp. 289, 313; and especially Austin's *Lectures on Jurisprudence*. The first volume of this brilliant work contains, I think without exception, the best modern statement of the utilitarian theory in its most plausible form—a statement equally remarkable for its ability, its candour, and its uniform courtesy to opponents.

among the modern achievements of ethics occupies on the utilitarian side a position corresponding in importance to the doctrine of innate moral faculties as distinguished from innate moral ideas on the intuitive side, was not absolutely unknown to the ancients, though they never perceived either the extent to which it may be carried or the important consequences that might be deduced from it. Some traces of it may be found in Aristotle,¹ and some of the Epicureans applied it to friendship, maintaining that, although we first of all love our friend on account of the pleasure he can give us, we come soon to love him for his own sake, and apart from all considerations of utility.² Among moderns Locke has the merit of having devised the phrase, "association of ideas",³ but he applied it only to some cases of apparently eccentric sympathies or antipathies. Hutcheson, however, closely anticipated both the doctrine of Hartley and the favourite illustration of the school; observing that we desire some things as themselves pleasurable and others only as means to obtain pleasurable things, and that these latter, which he terms "secondary desires," may become as powerful as the former. "Thus, as soon as we come to apprehend the use of wealth or power to gratify any of our original desires we must also desire them. Hence arises the universality of these desires of wealth and power, since they are the means of gratifying all our desires."⁴ The same principles were carried much farther by a clergyman named Gay, in a short dissertation which is now almost forgotten, but to which Hartley ascribed the first suggestion of his theory,⁵ and in which indeed the most valuable part of it is clearly laid down. Differing altogether from Hutcheson as to the existence of any

innate moral sense or principle of benevolence in man, Gay admitted that the arguments of Hutcheson to prove that the adult man possesses a moral sense were irresistible, and he attempted to reconcile this fact with the teaching of Locke by the doctrine of "secondary desires." He remarks that in our reasonings we do not always fall back upon first principles or axioms, but sometimes start from propositions which, though not self-evident, we know to be capable of proof. In the same way in justifying our actions we do not always appeal to the tendency to produce happiness which is their one ultimate justification, but content ourselves by showing that they produce some of the known "means to happiness." These "means to happiness," being continually appealed to as justifying motives, come insensibly to be regarded as ends, possessing an intrinsic value irrespective of their tendency; and in this manner it is that we love and admire virtue even when unconnected with our interests.¹

The great work of Hartley expanding and elaborating these views was published in 1747. It was encumbered by much physiological speculation into which it is needless for us now to enter, about the manner in which emotions act upon the nerves, and although accepted enthusiastically by Priestley and Belsham, and in some degree by Tucker, I do not think that its purely ethical speculations had much influence until they were adopted by some leading utilitarians in the present [nineteenth] century.² Whatever may be thought

¹ See a collection of passages from Aristotle, bearing on the subject, in Mackintosh's *Dissertation*.

² Cicero *De Finibus*, i. 5. This view is adopted in Tucker's *Light of Nature* (ed. 1842), vol. i. p. 167. See, too, Mill's *Analysis of the Human Mind*, vol. ii. p. 174.

³ *Essay*, book ii. ch. xxxiii.

⁴ Hutcheson, *On the Passions*, § 1. The "secondary desires" of Hutcheson are closely related to the "reflective affections" of Shaftesbury. "Not only the outward beings which offer themselves to the sense are the objects of the affection; but the very actions themselves, and the affections of pity, kindness, gratitude, and their contraries, being brought into the mind by reflection, become objects. So that by means of this reflected sense there arises another kind of affection towards those very affections themselves." (Shaftesbury's *Enquiry concerning Virtue*, book i. part. ii. § 3.)

⁵ See the preface to Hartley *On Man*. Gay's essay is prefixed to Law's translation of Archbishop King *On the Origin of Evil*.

¹ "The case is this. We first perceive or imagine some real good; *i. e.* fitness to promote our happiness in those things which we love or approve of. Hence those things and pleasures are so tied together and associated in our minds, that one cannot present itself, but the other will also occur. And the association remains even after that which at first gave them the connection is quite forgotten, or perhaps does not exist, but the contrary." (Gay's *Essay*, p. li.) "All affections whatsoever are finally resolvable into reason, pointing out private happiness, and are conversant only about things apprehended to be means tending to this end; and whenever this end is not perceived, they are to be accounted for from the association of ideas, and may properly enough be called habits." (*Ibid.*, p. xxxi.)

² Principally by Mr. James Mill, whose chapter on association, in his *Analysis of the Human Mind*, may probably rank with Paley's beautiful chapter on happiness, at the head of all modern writings on the utilitarian side—either of them, I think, being far more valuable than anything Bentham ever wrote on morals. This last writer—whose contempt for his predecessors was only equalled by his ignorance of their works, and who has added surprisingly little to moral science (considering the reputation he attained), except a barbarous nomenclature and an interminable series of classifications evincing no real subtlety of thought—makes, as far as I am aware, no use of the doctrine

of the truth, it is impossible to withhold some admiration from the intellectual grandeur of a system which, starting from a conception of human nature as low and as base as that of Mandeville or Hobbes, professes without the introduction of a single new or nobler element, by a strange process of philosophic alchemy, to evolve out of this original selfishness the most heroic and most sensitive virtue. The manner in which this achievement is effected is commonly illustrated by the passion of avarice. Money in itself possesses absolutely nothing that is admirable or pleasurable, but being the means of procuring us many of the objects of our desire, it becomes associated in our minds with the idea of pleasure; it is therefore itself loved; and it is possible for the love of money so completely to eclipse or supersede the love of all those things which money procures, that the miser will forego them all, rather than part with a fraction of his gold.¹

The same phenomenon may be traced, it is said, in a multitude of other forms.² Thus we seek power, because it gives us the means of gratifying many desires. It becomes associated with those desires, and is, at last, itself passionately loved. Praise indicates the affection of the eulogist, and marks us out for the affection of others. Valued at first as a means, it is soon desired as an end, and to such a pitch can our enthusiasm rise, that we may sacrifice all earthly things for posthumous praise which can never reach our ear. And the force of association may extend even farther. We love praise,

of association. Paley states it with his usual admirable clearness: "Having experienced in some instances a particular conduct to be beneficial to ourselves, or observed that it would be so, a sentiment of approbation rises up in our minds, which sentiment afterwards accompanies the idea or mention of the same conduct, although the private advantage which first existed no longer exist." (Paley, *Moral Philos.* i. § 5) Paley, however, made less use of this doctrine than might have been expected from so enthusiastic an admirer of Tucker. In our own day it has been much used by Mr. J. S. Mill.

¹ This illustration, which was first employed by Hutcheson, is very happily developed by Gay (p. li.). It was then used by Hartley, and finally Tucker reproduced the whole theory with the usual illustration without any acknowledgment of the works of his predecessors, employing, however, the term "translation" instead of "association" of ideas. See his curious chapter on the subject, *Light of Nature*, book i. ch. xviii.

² "It is the nature of translation to throw desire from the end upon the means, which thenceforward become an end capable of exciting an appetite without prospect of the consequences whereto they lead. Our habits and most of the desires that occupy human life are of this translated kind." (Tucker's *Light of Nature*, vol. ii. [ed. 1842], p. 281.)

because it procures us certain advantages. We then love it more than these advantages. We proceed by the same process to transfer our affections to those things which naturally or generally procure praise. We at last love what is praiseworthy more than praise, and will endure perpetual obloquy rather than abandon it.³ To this process, it is said, all our moral sentiments must be ascribed. Man has no natural benevolent feelings. He is at first governed solely by his interest, but the infant learns to associate its pleasures with the idea of its mother, the boy with the idea of his family, the man with those of his class, his church, his country, and at last of all mankind, and in each case an independent affection is at length formed.⁴ The sight of suffering in others awakens in the child a painful recollection of his own sufferings, which parents, by appealing to the infant imagination, still further strengthen, and besides, "when several children are educated together, the pains, the denials of pleasure, and the sorrows which affect one gradually extend in some degree to all;" and thus the suffering of others becomes associated with the idea of our own, and the feeling of compassion is engendered.⁵ Benevolence and justice are associated in our minds with the esteem of our fellow-men, with reciprocity of favours, and with the hope of future reward. They are loved at first for these, and finally for themselves, while opposite trains of association produce opposite feelings towards malevolence and injustice.⁶ And thus virtue, con-

¹ Mill's *Analysis of the Human Mind*. The desire for posthumous fame is usually cited by intuitive moralists as a proof of a naturally disinterested element in man.

² Mill's *Analysis*.

³ Hartley, *On Man*, vol. i. pp. 474-475.

⁴ "Benevolence . . . has also a high degree of honour and esteem annexed to it, procures us many advantages and returns of kindness, both from the person obliged and others, and is most closely connected with the hopes of reward in a future state, and of self-approbation or the moral sense, and the same things hold with respect to generosity in a much higher degree. It is easy, therefore, to see how such associations may be formed as to engage us to forego great pleasure, or endure great pain for the sake of others, how these associations may be attended with so great a degree of pleasure as to overrule the positive pain endured or the negative one from the foregoing of a pleasure, and yet how there may be no direct explicit expectation of reward either from God or man, by natural consequence or express appointment, not even of the concomitant pleasure that engages the agent to undertake the benevolent and generous action; and this I take to be a proof from the doctrine of association that there is and must be such a thing as pure disinterested benevolence; also a just account of the origin and

sidered as a whole, becomes the supreme object of our affections. Of all our pleasures, more are derived from those acts which are called virtuous than from any other source. The virtuous acts of others procure us countless advantages. Our own virtue obtains for us the esteem of men and return of favours. All the epithets of praise are appropriated to virtue, and all the epithets of blame to vice. Religion teaches us to connect hopes of infinite joy with the one, and fears of infinite suffering with the other. Virtue becomes therefore peculiarly associated with the idea of pleasurable things. It is soon loved, independently of and more than these; we feel a glow of pleasure in practising it, and an intense pain in violating it. Conscience, which is thus generated, becomes the ruling principle of our lives,² and having learnt to sacrifice all earthly things rather than disobey it, we rise, by an association of ideas, into the loftiest region of heroism.³

The influence of this ingenious, though I think in some respect fanciful, theory depends less upon the number than upon the ability of its adherents. Though little known, I believe, beyond England, it has in England exercised a great fascination over exceedingly dissimilar minds,³ and it does undoubtedly evade some of the objections to the other forms of the inductive theory. Thus, when intuitive moralists contend that our moral judgments, being instantaneous and effected under the manifest impulse

of an emotion of sympathy or repulsion, are as far as possible removed from that cold calculation of interests to which the utilitarian reduces them, it is answered, that the association of ideas is sufficient to engender a feeling which is the proximate cause of our decision.⁴ Alone, of all the moralists of this school, the disciple of Hartley recognises conscience as a real and important element of our nature,⁵ and maintains that it is possible to love virtue for itself as a form of happiness without any thought of ulterior consequences.⁶ The immense value this theory ascribes to education gives it an unusual practical importance. When we are balancing between a crime and a virtue, our wills, it is said, are necessarily determined by the greater pleasure. If we find more pleasure in the vice than in the virtue, we inevitably gravitate to evil. If we find more pleasure in the virtue than in the vice, we are as irresistibly attracted towards good. But the strength of such motives may be immeasurably enhanced by an early association of ideas. If we have been accustomed from childhood to associate our ideas of praise and pleasure with virtue, we shall readily yield to virtuous motives; if with vice, to vicious ones. This readiness to yield to one or other set of motives constitutes disposition, which is thus, according to these moralists, altogether an artificial thing,

nature of it." (Hartley, *On Man*, vol. i. pp. 473-474.)

See too Mill's *Analysis*, vol. ii. p. 252.

² Mill's *Analysis*, vol. ii. pp. 244-247.

³ "With self-interest," said Hartley, "man must begin; he may end in self-annihilation"; or as Coleridge happily puts it, "Legality precedes morality in every individual, even as the Jewish dispensation preceded the Christian in the world at large." (*Notes Theological and Political*, p. 340.) It might be retorted with much truth, that we begin by practising morality as a duty—we end by practising it as a pleasure, without any reference to duty. Coleridge, who expressed for the Benthamite theories a very cordial detestation, sometimes guided into them, himself. "The happiness of man," he says, "is the end of virtue, and truth is the knowledge of the means." (*The Friend*, ed. 1850, vol. ii. p. 192.) "What can be the object of human virtue but the happiness of sentient, still more of moral beings?" (*Notes Theol. and Polit.* p. 351.) Leibnitz says, "Quand on aura appris à faire des actions louables par ambition, on les fera après par inclination." (*Sur l'Art de connaître les Hommes*.)

⁴ E.g., MacIntosh and James Mill. Coleridge in his younger days was an enthusiastic admirer of Hartley, but chiefly, I believe, on account of his theory of vibrations. He named his son after him, and described him in one of his poems as:—

"He of mortal kind
Wisest, the first who marked the ideal tribes
Up the fine fibres through the sentient brain."
(*Religious Musings*.)

⁴ This position is elaborated in a passage too long for quotation by Mr Austin. (*Lectures on Jurisprudence*, vol. i. p. 44.)

⁵ Hobbes defines conscience as "the opinion of evidence" (*On Human Nature*, ch. vi. § 8); Locke as "our own opinion or judgment of the moral rectitude or pravity of our own actions" (*Essay*, book i. ch. iii. § 8). In Bentham there is very little on the subject; but in one place he informs us that "conscience is a thing of fictitious existence, supposed to occupy a seat in the mind" (*Deontology*, vol. i. p. 137); and in another he ranks "love of duty" (which he describes as an "impossible motive, in so far as duty is synonymous to obligation") as a variety of the "love of power" (*Springs of Action*, u.). Mr Bain says "conscience is an imitation within ourselves of the government without us." (*Emotions and Will*, p. 313.)

⁶ "However much they [utilitarians] may believe (as they do) that actions and dispositions are only virtuous because they promote another end than virtue, yet this being granted . . . they not only place virtue at the very head of the things which are good as means to the ultimate end, but they also recognise as a psychological fact the possibility of its being to the individual a good in itself. Virtue, according to the utilitarian doctrine, is not naturally and originally part of the end, but it is capable of becoming so. . . What was once desired as an instrument for the attainment of happiness has come to be desired . . . as part of happiness. Human nature is so constituted as to desire nothing which is not either a part of happiness or a means of happiness." (J. S. Mill's *Utilitarianism*, pp. 54, 55, 56, 52.)

the product of education, and effected by association of ideas.*

It will be observed, however, that this theory, refined and imposing as it may appear, is still essentially a selfish one. Even when sacrificing all earthly objects through love of virtue, the good man is simply seeking his greatest enjoyment, indulging a kind of mental luxury which gives him more pleasure than what he foregoes, just as the miser finds more pleasure in accumulation than in any form of expenditure.² There has been, indeed, one attempt to emancipate the theory from this condition, but it appears to me altogether futile. It has been said that men in the first instance indulge in baneful excesses on account of the pleasure they afford, but the habit being contracted, continue to practise them after they have ceased to afford pleasure, and that a similar law may operate in the case of the habit of virtue.³ But the reason why men

who have contracted a habit continue to practise it after it has ceased to give them positive enjoyment is because to desist creates a restlessness and uneasiness which amounts to acute mental pain. To avoid that pain is the motive of the action.

The reader who has perused the passages I have accumulated in the notes will be able to judge with what degree of justice utilitarian writers denounce with indignation the imputation of selfishness as a calumny against their system. It is not, I think, a strained or unnatural use of language to describe as selfish or interested all actions which a man performs, in order himself to avoid suffering or acquire the greatest possible enjoyment. If this be so, the term selfish is strictly applicable to all the branches of this system.⁴ At the same time it must be acknowledged that there is a broad difference between the refined hedonism of the utilitarians we have last noticed and the writings of Hobbes, of Mandeville, or of Paley. It must be acknowledged, also, that not a few intuitive or stoical moralists have spoken of the pleasure to be derived from virtue in

* "A man is tempted to commit adultery with the wife of his friend. The composition of the motive is obvious. He does not obey the motive. Why? He obeys other motives which are stronger. Though pleasures are associated with the immoral act, pains are associated with it also—the pains of the injured husband, the pains of the wife, the moral indignation of mankind, the future reproaches of his own mind. Some men obey the first rather than the second motive. The reason is obvious. In these the association of the act with the pleasure is from habit unduly strong, the association of the act with pains is from want of habit unduly weak. This is the case of a bad education. Among the different classes of motives there are men who are more easily and strongly operated on by some, others by others. We have also seen that this is entirely owing to habits of association. This facility of being acted upon by motives of a particular description is that which we call disposition." (Mill's *Analysis*, vol. II, pp. 212, 213, &c.) Adam Smith says, I think with much wisdom, that "the great secret of education is to direct vanity to proper objects." (*Moral Sentiments*, part VI § 3.)

² "Goodness in ourselves is the prospect of satisfaction annexed to the welfare of others, so that we please them for the pleasure we receive ourselves in so doing, or to avoid the uneasiness we should feel in omitting it. But God is completely happy in Himself, nor can His happiness receive increase or diminution from anything befalling His creatures, wherefore His goodness is pure, disinterested bounty, without any return of joy or satisfaction to Himself. Therefore it is no wonder we have imperfect notions of a quality whereof we have no experience in our own nature" (Tucker's *Light of Nature*, vol. I, p. 355.) "It is the privilege of God alone to act upon pure, disinterested bounty, without the least addition thereby to His own enjoyment" (*Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 279.) On the other hand, Hutcheson asks: "If there be such disposition in the Deity, where is the impossibility of some small degree of this public love in His creatures, and why must they be supposed incapable of acting but from self-love?" (*Enquiry concerning Moral Good*, § 2.)

³ "We gradually, through the influence of association, come to desire the means without thinking of the end; the action itself becomes an object of desire, and is performed without reference to any motive beyond itself. Thus far, it may still be objected that the action having, through association, become pleasurable, we are as much as before moved to act by the anticipation

of pleasure—namely, the pleasure of the action itself. But granting this, the matter does not end here. As we proceed in the formation of habits, and become accustomed to will a particular act because it is pleasurable, we at last continue to will it without any reference to its being pleasurable. In this manner it is that habits of hurtful excess continue to be practised, although they have ceased to be pleasurable, and in this manner also it is that the habit of willing to persevere in the course which he has chosen does not desert the moral hero, even when the reward is anything but an equivalent for the suffering he undergoes, or the wishes he may have to renounce." (Mill's *Logic*, 4th edition, vol. II, pp. 416, 417.)

⁴ "In regard to interest in the most extended, which is the original and only strictly proper, sense of the word disinterested, no human act has ever been or ever can be disinterested. In the only sense in which disinterestedness can with truth be predicated of human actions, it is employed to denote, not the absence of all interest, but only the absence of all interest of the self-regarding class. Not but that it is very frequently predicated of human action in cases in which divers interests, to no one of which the appellation of self-regarding can with propriety be denied, have been exercising their influence, and in particular fear of God, or hope from God, and fear of ill-repute, or hope of good repute. If what is above be correct, the most disinterested of men is not less under the dominion of interest than the most interested. The only cause of his being styled disinterested is its not having been observed that the sort of motive (suppose it sympathy for an individual or class) has as truly a corresponding interest belonging to it as any other species of motive has. Of this contradiction between the truth of the case and the language employed in speaking of it, the cause is that in the one case men have not been in the habit of making—as in point of consistency they ought to have made—of the word interest that use which in the other case they have been in the habit of making of it." (Beetham's *Spring of Action*, II, § 2.)

language little if at all different from these writers.* The main object of the earlier members of the inductive school was to depress human nature to their standard, by resolving all the noblest actions into coarse and selfish elements. The main object of some of the more influential of the later members of this school has been to sublimate their conceptions of happiness and interest in such a manner as to include the highest displays of heroism. As we have seen, they fully admit that conscience is a real thing, and should be the supreme guide of our lives, though they contend that it springs originally from selfishness, transformed under the influence of the association of ideas. They acknowledge the reality of the sympathetic feelings, though they usually trace them to the same source. They cannot, it is true, consistently with their principles, recognise the possibility of conduct which is in the strictest sense of the word unselfish, but they contend that it is quite possible for a man to find his highest pleasure in sacrificing himself for the good of others, that the association of virtue and pleasure is only perfect when it leads habitually to spontaneous and uncalculating action, and that no man is in a healthy moral condition who does not find more pain in committing a crime than he could derive pleasure from any of its consequences. The theory in its principle remains unchanged, but in the hands of some of these writers the spirit has wholly altered.

Having thus given a brief, but, I trust, clear and faithful account of the different modifications of the inductive theory, I shall proceed to state some of the principal objections that have been and may be brought against it. I shall then endeavour to define and defend the opinions of those who believe that our moral feelings are an essential part of our constitution, developed by, but not derived from education; and I shall conclude this chapter by an enquiry into the order of their evolution; so that having obtained some notion of the natural history of morals, we may be able, in the

ensuing chapters, to judge how far their normal progress has been accelerated or retarded by religious or political agencies.

"Psychology," it has been truly said, "is but developed consciousness."† When moralists assert, that what we call virtue derives its reputation solely from its utility, and that the interest or pleasure of the agent is the one motive to practise it, our first question is naturally how far this theory agrees with the feelings and with the language of mankind. But if tested by this criterion, there never was a doctrine more emphatically condemned than utilitarianism. In all its stages, and in all its assertions, it is in direct opposition to common language and to common sentiments. In all nations and in all ages, the ideas of interest and utility on the one hand and of virtue on the other, have been regarded by the multitude as perfectly distinct, and all languages recognise the distinction. The terms honour, justice, rectitude, or virtue, and their equivalents in every language, present to the mind ideas essentially and broadly differing from the terms prudence, sagacity, or interest. The two lines of conduct may coincide, but they are never confused, and we have not the slightest difficulty in imagining them antagonistic. When we say a man is governed by a high sense of honour, or by strong moral feeling, we do not mean that he is prudently pursuing either his own interests or the interests of society. The universal sentiment of mankind represents self-sacrifice as an essential element of a meritorious act, and means by self-sacrifice the deliberate adoption of the least pleasurable course without the prospect of any pleasure in return. A selfish act may be innocent, but cannot be virtuous, and to ascribe all good deeds to selfish motives is not the distortion but the negation of virtue. No Epicurean could avow before a popular audience that the one end of his life was the pursuit of his own happiness without an outburst of indignation and contempt.‡ No man could consciously make this—which according to the selfish theory is the only rational and indeed possible motive of action—the deliberate object of all his undertakings, without his character becoming despicable and degraded. Whether we look within ourselves or examine the conduct either of our

* Among others Bishop Butler, who draws some very subtle distinctions on the subject in his first sermon "on the love of our neighbour." Dugald Stewart remarks that, "although we apply the epithet selfish to avarice and to low and private sensuality, we never apply it to the desire of knowledge or to the pursuits of virtue, which are certainly sources of more exquisite pleasure than riches or sensuality can bestow." (*Active and Moral Powers*, vol. i. p. 19.)

† Sir W. Hamilton.

‡ Cicero *De Fin.* lib. ii.

enemies or of our friends, or adjudicate upon the characters in history or in fiction, our feelings on these matters are the same. In exact proportion as we believe a desire for personal enjoyment to be the motive of a good act is the merit of the agent diminished. If we believe the motive to be wholly selfish the merit is altogether destroyed. If we believe it to be wholly disinterested the merit is altogether unalloyed. Hence the admiration bestowed upon Prometheus, or suffering virtue constant beneath the blows of Almighty malice, or on the atheist who with no prospect of future reward suffered a fearful death, rather than abjure an opinion which could be of no benefit to society, because he believed it to be the truth. Selfish moralists deny the possibility of that which all ages, all nations, all popular judgments pronounce to have been the characteristic of every noble act that has ever been performed. Now, when a philosophy which seeks by the light of consciousness to decipher the laws of our moral being proves so diametrically opposed to the conclusions arrived at by the great mass of mankind, who merely follow their consciousness without endeavouring to frame systems of philosophy, that it makes most of the distinctions of common ethical language absolutely unmeaning, this is, to say the least, a strong presumption against its truth. If Molière's hero had been speaking prose all his life without knowing it, this was simply because he did not understand what prose was. In the present case we are asked to believe that men have been under a total delusion about the leading principles of their lives which they had distinguished by a whole vocabulary of terms.

It is said that the case becomes different when the pleasure sought is not a gross or material enjoyment, but the satisfaction of performed virtue. I suspect that if men could persuade themselves that the one motive of a virtuous man was the certainty that the act he accomplished would be followed by a glow of satisfaction so intense as more than to compensate for any sacrifice he might have made, the difference would not be as great as is supposed. In fact, however—and the consciousness of this lies, I conceive, at the root of the opinions of men upon the subject—the pleasure of virtue is one which can only be obtained on the express condition of its not being the

object sought. Phenomena of this kind are familiar to us all. Thus, for example, it has often been observed that prayer, by a law of our nature and apart from all supernatural intervention, exercises a reflex influence of a very beneficial character upon the minds of the worshippers. The man who offers up his petitions with passionate earnestness, with unflinching faith, and with a vivid realisation of the presence of an Unseen Being, has risen to a condition of mind which is itself eminently favourable both to his own happiness and to the expansion of his moral qualities. But he who expects nothing more will never attain this. To him who neither believes nor hopes that his petitions will receive a response such a mental state is impossible. No Protestant before an image of the Virgin, no Christian before a pagan idol, could possibly attain it. If prayers were offered up solely with a view to this benefit, they would be absolutely sterile and would speedily cease. Thus again, certain political economists have contended that to give money in charity is worse than useless, that it is positively noxious to society; but they have added that the gratification of our benevolent affections is pleasing to ourselves, and that the pleasure we derive from this source may be so much greater than the evil resulting from our guilt, that we may justly, according to the "greatest happiness principle," purchase this large amount of gratification to ourselves by a slight injury to our neighbours. The political economy involved in this very characteristic specimen of utilitarian ethics I shall hereafter examine. At present it is sufficient to observe that no one who consciously practised benevolence solely from this motive could obtain the pleasure in question. We receive enjoyment from the thought that we have done good. We never could receive that enjoyment if we believed and realised that we were doing harm. The same thing is pre-eminently true of the satisfaction of conscience. A feeling of satisfaction follows the accomplishment of duty for itself, but if the duty be performed solely through the expectation of a mental pleasure conscience refuses to ratify the bargain.

There is no fact more conspicuous in human nature than the broad distinction, both in kind and degree, drawn between the moral and the other parts of our nature. But this on utilitarian principles

is altogether unaccountable. If the excellence of virtue consists solely in its utility or tendency to promote the happiness of men, we should be compelled to canonise a crowd of acts which are utterly remote from all our ordinary notions of morality. The whole tendency of political economy and philosophical history which reveal the physiology of societies, is to show that the happiness and welfare of mankind are evolved much more from our selfish than from what are termed our virtuous acts. The prosperity of nations and the progress of civilisation are mainly due to the exertions of men who, while pursuing strictly their own interests, were unconsciously promoting the interests of the community. The selfish instinct that leads men to accumulate confers ultimately more advantage upon the world than the generous instinct that leads men to give. A great historian has contended with some force that intellectual development is more important to societies than moral development. Yet who ever seriously questioned the reality of the distinction that separates these things? The reader will probably exclaim that the key to that distinction is to be found in the motive; but it is one of the paradoxes of the utilitarian school that the motive of the agent has absolutely no influence on the morality of the act. According to Bentham, there is but one motive possible, the pursuit of our own enjoyment. The most virtuous, the most vicious, and the most indifferent of actions, if measured by this test, would be exactly the same, and an investigation of motives should therefore be altogether excluded from our moral judgments.¹

¹ "As there is not any sort of pleasure that is not itself a good, nor any sort of pain the exemption from which is not a good, and as nothing but the expectation of the eventual enjoyment of pleasure in some shape, or of exemption from pain in some shape, can operate in the character of a motive, a necessary consequence is that if by motive be meant sort of motive, there is not any such thing as a bad motive." (Bentham's *Springs of Action*, ii. § 4.) The first clauses of the following passage I have already quoted: "Pleasure is itself a good, nay, setting aside immunity from pain, the only good. Pain is in itself an evil, and indeed, without exception, the only evil, or else the words good and evil have no meaning. And this is alike true of every sort of pain, and of every sort of pleasure. It follows therefore immediately and incontestably that there is no such thing as any sort of motive that is in itself a bad one." (*Principles of Morals and Legislation*, ch. ix) "The search after motive is one of the prominent causes of men's bewilderment in the investigation of questions of morals. . . . But this is a pursuit in which every moment employed is a moment wasted. All motives are abstractedly good. No man has ever had, can, or could have a motive different from the pursuit of pleasure or of shunning pain." (*Deontology*,

Whatever test we adopt, the difficulty of accounting for the unique and pre-eminent position mankind have assigned to virtue will remain. If we judge by tendencies, a crowd of objects and of acts to which no mortal ever dreamed of ascribing virtue, contribute largely to the happiness of man. If we judge by motives, the moralists we are reviewing have denied all generic difference between prudential and virtuous motives. If we judge by intentions, it is certain that, however much truth or chastity may contribute to the happiness of mankind, it is not with philanthropic intentions that those virtues are cultivated.

It is often said that intuitive moralists in their reasonings are guilty of continually abandoning their principles by themselves appealing to the tendency of certain acts to promote human happiness as a justification, and the charge is usually accompanied by a challenge to show any confessed virtue that has not that tendency. To the first objection it may be shortly answered that no intuitive moralist ever dreamed of doubting that benevolence or charity, or, in other words, the promotion of the happiness of man, is a duty. He maintains that it not only is so, but that we arrive at this fact by direct intuition, and not by the discovery that such a course is conducive to our own interest. But while he cordially recognises this branch of virtue, and while he has therefore a perfect right to allege the beneficial effects of a virtue in its defence, he refuses to admit that all virtue can be reduced to this single principle. With the general sentiment of mankind he regards charity as a good thing only because it is of use to the world. With the same general sentiment of mankind he believes that chastity and truth have an independent value, distinct from their influence upon happiness. To the question whether every confessed virtue is conducive to human happiness it is less easy to reply, for it is usually extremely difficult to calculate the remote tendencies of acts, and in cases where, in

vol. i. p. 126.) Mr. Mill's doctrine appears somewhat different from this, but the difference is I think only apparent. He says: "The motive has nothing to do with the morality of the action, though much with the worth of the agent," and he afterwards explains this last statement by saying that the "motive makes a great difference in our moral estimation of the agent, especially if it indicates a good or a bad habitual disposition, a bent of character from which useful or from which hurtful actions are likely to arise." (*Utilitarianism*, and cf. pp. 26-27.)

the common apprehension of mankind, the morality is very clear, the consequences are often very obscure. Notwithstanding the claim of great precision which utilitarian writers so boastfully make, the standard by which they profess to measure morals is itself absolutely incapable of definition or accurate explanation. Happiness is one of the most indeterminate and undefinable words in the language, and what are the conditions of "the greatest possible happiness" no one can precisely say. No two nations, perhaps no two individuals, would find them the same.¹ And even if every virtuous act were incontestably useful, it by no means follows that its virtue is derived from its utility.

It may be readily granted that as a general rule those acts which we call virtuous are unquestionably productive of happiness, if not to the agent, at least to mankind in general; but we have already seen that they have by no means that monopoly or pre-eminence of utility which, on utilitarian principles, the unique position assigned to them would appear to imply. It may be added that if we were to proceed in detail to estimate acts by their consequences we should soon be led to very startling conclusions. In the first place, it is obvious that if virtues are only good because they promote, and vices only evil because they impair, the happiness of mankind, the degrees of excellence or criminality must be strictly proportioned to the degrees of utility or the reverse.² Every action, every disposition, every class, every condition of society must take its place on the moral scale precisely in accordance with the degree in which it promotes or diminishes human happiness. Now it is extremely questionable whether some of the most monstrous forms of sensuality which it is scarcely possible to name cause as much unhappiness as some infirmities of temper, or procrastination or hastiness of judgment. It is scarcely doubtful that a modest, diffident, and retiring nature, distrustful of its own abilities and shrinking with humility from conflict, produces on the whole less benefit to the world

than the self-assertion of an audacious and arrogant nature, which is impelled to every struggle, and develops every capacity. Gratitude has no doubt done much to soften and sweeten the intercourse of life, but the corresponding feeling of revenge was for centuries the one bulwark against social anarchy, and is even now one of the chief restraints to crime.³ On the great theatre of public life, especially in periods of great convulsions when passions are fiercely roused, it is neither the man of delicate scrupulosity and sincere impartiality, nor yet the single-minded religious enthusiast incapable of dissimulation or procrastination, who confers most benefit upon the world. It is much rather the astute statesman earnest about his ends but unscrupulous about his means, equally free from the trammels of conscience and from the blindness of zeal, who governs because he partly yields to the passions and the prejudices of his time. But however much some modern writers may idolise the heroes of success, however much they may despise and ridicule those far nobler men, whose wide tolerance and scrupulous honour rendered them unfit leaders in the fray, it has scarcely yet been contended that the delicate conscientiousness which in these cases impairs utility constitutes vice. If utility is the sole measure of virtue, it is difficult to understand how we could look with moral disapprobation on any class who prevent greater evils than they cause.

¹ M. Dumont, the translator of Bentham, has elaborated in a rather famous passage the utilitarian notions about vengeance. "Toute espèce de satisfaction entraînant une peine pour le délinquant produit naturellement un plaisir de vengeance pour la partie lésée. Ce plaisir est un gain. Il rappelle la parabole de Samson. C'est le doux qui sort du terrible. C'est le miel recueilli dans la gueule du lion. Produit sans frais, résultat net d'une opération nécessaire d'autres titres, c'est une jouissance à cultiver comme toute autre; car le plaisir de la vengeance considérée abstraitement n'est comme tout autre plaisir qu'un bien en lui-même." (*Principes du Code pénal* 2^eme partie, ch. xxi.) According to a very acute living writer of this school, "The eternal law stands to the passion of revenge in much the same relation as marriage to the sexual appetite." (J. F. Stephen *On the Criminal Law of England*, p. 99.) Mr. Mill observes that, "In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility" (*Utilitarianism*, p. 21.) It is but fair to give a specimen of the opposite order of extravagance. "So well convinced was Father Claver of the eternal happiness of almost all whom he assisted," says this saintly missionary's biographer, "that speaking once of some persons who had delivered a criminal into the hands of justice, he said, 'God forgive them; but they have secured the salvation of this man at the probable risk of their own'" (Newman's *Anglican Difficulties*, p. 205.)

² This truth has been admirably illustrated by Mr Herbert Spencer (*Social Statics*, pp. 1-8).

³ "On évalue la grandeur de la vertu en comparant les biens obtenus aux maux au prix desquels on les achète: l'excédant en bien mesure la valeur de la vertu, comme l'excédant en mal mesure le degré de haine que doit inspirer le vice." (Ch. Comte, *Traité de Législation*, liv. ii. ch. xii.)

But with such a principle we might find strange priestesses at the utilitarian shrine. "Aufer meretrices de rebus humanis," said St. Augustine, "turbaveris omnia libidinibus."¹

Let us suppose an enquirer who intended to regulate his life consistently by the utilitarian principle; let us suppose him to have overcome the first great difficulty of his school, arising from the apparent divergence of his own interests from his duty, to have convinced himself that that divergence does not exist, and to have accordingly made the pursuit of duty his single object: it remains to consider what kind of course he would pursue. He is informed that it is a pure illusion to suppose that human actions have any other end or rule than happiness, that nothing is intrinsically good or intrinsically bad apart from its consequences, that no act which is useful can possibly be vicious, and that the utility of an act constitutes and measures its value. One of his first observations will be that in very many special cases acts such as murder, theft, or falsehood, which the world calls criminal, and which in the majority of instances would undoubtedly be hurtful, appear eminently productive of good. Why then, he may ask, should they not in these cases be performed? The answer he receives is that they would not really be useful, because we must consider the remote as well as the immediate consequences of actions, and although in particular instances a falsehood or even a murder might appear beneficial, it is one of the most important interests of mankind that the sanctity of life and property should be preserved, and that a high standard of veracity should be maintained. But this answer is obviously insufficient. It is necessary to show that the extent to which a single act of what the world calls crime would weaken these great bulwarks of society is such as to counterbalance the immediate good which it produces. If it does not, the balance will be on the side of happiness, the murder or theft or falsehood will be useful, and therefore, on utilitarian principles, will be virtuous. Now even in the case of public acts, the effect of the example of an obscure individual is usually small, but if the act be accomplished in perfect secrecy, the evil effects resulting from the example will be

entirely absent. It has been said that it would be dangerous to give men permission to perpetrate what men call crimes in secret. This may be a very good reason why the utilitarian should not proclaim such a principle, but it is no reason why he should not act upon it. If a man be convinced that no act which is useful can possibly be criminal, if it be in his power by perpetrating what is called a crime to obtain an end of great immediate utility, and if he is able to secure such absolute secrecy as to render it perfectly certain that his act cannot become an example, and cannot in consequence exercise any influence on the general standard of morals, it appears demonstrably certain that on utilitarian principles he would be justified in performing it. If what we call virtue be only virtuous *because* it is useful, it can only be virtuous *when* it is useful. The question of the morality of a large number of acts must therefore depend upon the probability of their detection,^{*} and a little adroit hypocrisy must often, not merely in appearance but in reality, convert a vice into a virtue. The only way by which it has been attempted with any plausibility to evade this conclusion has been by asserting that the act would impair the disposition of the agent, or in other words predispose him on other occasions to perform acts which are generally hurtful to society. But in the first place a single act has no such effect upon disposition as to

^{*} The reader will here observe the very transparent sophistry of an assertion which is repeated *ad nauseam* by utilitarians. They tell us that a regard to the remote consequences of our actions would lead us to the conclusion that we should never perform an act which would not be conducive to human happiness if it were universally performed, or, as Mr. Austin expresses it, that "the question is if acts of this class were generally done or generally forborne or omitted, what would be the probable effect on the general happiness or good?" (*Lectures on Jurisprudence*, vol. i p. 32.) The question is nothing of the kind. If I am convinced that utility alone constitutes virtue, and if I am meditating any particular act, the sole question of morality must be whether that act is on the whole useful, produces a net result of happiness. To determine this question I must consider both the immediate and the remote consequences of the act; but the latter are not ascertained by asking what would be the result if everyone did as I do, but by asking how far, as a matter of fact, my act is likely to produce imitators, or affect the conduct and future acts of others. It may no doubt be convenient and useful to form classifications based on the general tendency of different courses to promote or diminish happiness, but such classifications cannot alter the morality of particular acts. It is quite clear that no act which produces on the whole more pleasure than pain can on utilitarian principles be vicious. It is, I think, equally clear that no one could act consistently on such a principle without being led to consequences which in the common judgment of mankind are grossly and scandalously immoral.

¹ *De Ordine*, ii. 4. The experiment has more than once been tried at Venice, Pisa, &c., and always with the results St. Augustine predicted.

counteract a great immediate good, especially when, as we have supposed, that act is not a revolt against what is believed to be right, but is performed under the full belief that it is in accordance with the one rational rule of morals, and in the next place, as far as the act would form a habit it would appear to be the habit of in all cases regulating actions by a precise and minute calculation of their utility, which is the very ideal of utilitarian virtue.

If our enquirer happens to be a man of strong imagination and of solitary habits, it is very probable that he will be accustomed to live much in a world of imagination, a world peopled with beings that are to him as real as those of flesh, with its joys and sorrows, its temptations and its sins. In obedience to the common feelings of our nature, he may have struggled long and painfully against sins of the imagination, which he was never seriously tempted to convert into sins of action. But his new philosophy will be admirably fitted to console his mind. If remorse be absent the indulgence of the most vicious imagination is a pleasure, and if this indulgence does not lead to action it is a clear gain, and therefore to be applauded. That a course may be continually pursued in imagination without leading to corresponding actions he will speedily discover, and indeed it has always been one of the chief objections brought against fiction that the constant exercise of the sympathies in favour of imaginary beings is found positively to indispose men to practical benevolence.¹

Proceeding farther in his course, our moralist will soon find reason to qualify the doctrine of remote consequences, which plays so large a part in the calculations of utilitarianism. It is said that it is criminal to destroy human beings, even when the crime would appear productive of great utility, for every instance of murder weakens the sanctity of life. But experience shows that it is possible for men to be perfectly indifferent to one particular section of human life without this indifference extending to others. Thus, among the ancient Greeks, the murder or exposition of the children of poor parents was continually practised with the most absolute callousness, without exercising any appre-

ciable influence upon the respect for adult life. In the same manner what may be termed religious unverity, or the habit of propagating what are deemed useful superstitions, with the consciousness of their being false, or at least suppressing or misrepresenting the facts that might invalidate them, does not in any degree imply industrial unverity. Nothing is more common than to find extreme dishonesty in speculation coexisting with scrupulous veracity in business. If any vice might be expected to conform strictly to the utilitarian theory, it would be cruelty; but cruelty to animals may exist without leading to cruelty to men; and even where spectacles in which animal suffering forms a leading element exercise an injurious influence on character, it is more than doubtful whether the measure of human unhappiness they may ultimately produce is at all equivalent to the passionate enjoyment they immediately afford.

This last consideration, however, makes it necessary to notice a new, and, as it appears to me, almost grotesque development of the utilitarian theory. The duty of humanity to animals, though for a long period too much neglected, may, on the principles of the intuitive moralist, be easily explained and justified. Our circumstances and characters produce in us many and various affections towards all with whom we come in contact, and our consciences pronounce these affections to be good or bad. We feel that humanity or benevolence is a good affection, and also that it is due in different degrees to different classes. Thus it is not only natural but right that a man should care for his own family more than for the world at large; and this obligation applies not only to parents who are responsible for having brought their children into existence, and to children who owe a debt of gratitude to their parents, but also to brothers who have no such special tie. So too we feel it to be both unnatural and wrong to feel no stronger interest in our fellow-countrymen than in other men. In the same way we feel that there is a wide interval between the humanity it is both natural and right to exhibit towards animals, and that which is due to our own species. Strong philanthropy could hardly coexist with cannibalism, and a man who had no hesitation in destroying human life for the sake of obtaining the skins of the

¹ There are some very good remarks on the possibility of living a life of imagination wholly distinct from the life of action in Mr. Bain's *Emotions and Will*, p. 240.

victims, or of freeing himself from some trifling inconvenience, would scarcely be eulogised for his benevolence. Yet a man may be regarded as very humane to animals who has no scruple in sacrificing their lives for his food, his pleasures, or his convenience.

Towards the close of the last [the eighteenth] century an energetic agitation in favour of humanity to animals arose in England, and the utilitarian moralists, who were then rising into influence, caught the spirit of their time and made very creditable efforts to extend it.¹ It is manifest, however, that a theory which recognised no other end in virtue than the promotion of human happiness could supply no adequate basis for the movement. Some of the recent members of the school have accordingly enlarged their theory, maintaining that acts are virtuous when they produce a net result of happiness, and vicious when they produce a net result of suffering, altogether irrespective of the question whether this enjoyment or suffering is of men or animals. In other words, they place the duty of man to animals on exactly the same basis as the duty of man to his fellow-men, maintaining that no suffering can be rightly inflicted on brutes which does not produce a larger amount of happiness to man.²

The first reflection suggested by this theory is, that it appears difficult to understand how, on the principles of the inductive school, it could be arrived at. Benevolence, as we have seen, according to these writers begins in interest. We first of all do good to men, because it is for our advantage, though the force of the habit may at last act irrespective of interest. But in the case of animals which cannot resent barbarity, this foundation of self-interest does not for the most

part exist. Probably, however, an association of ideas might help to solve the difficulty, and the habit of benevolence generated originally from the social relations of men might at last be extended to the animal world; but that it should be so to the extent of placing the duty to animals on the same basis as the duty to men, I do not anticipate, or (at the risk of being accused of great inhumanity), I must add, desire. I cannot look forward to a time when no one will wear any article of dress formed out of the skin of an animal, or feed upon animal flesh, till he has ascertained that the pleasure he derives from doing so exceeds the pain inflicted upon the animal, as well as the pleasure of which by abridging its life he has deprived it.³ And supposing that, with such a calculation before him, the utilitarian should continue to feed on the flesh of animals, his principle might carry him to further conclusions, from which I confess I should recoil. If, when Swift was writing his famous essay in favour of employing for food the redundant babies of a half-starving population, he had been informed that, according to the more advanced moralists, to eat a child, and to eat a sheep, rest upon exactly the same ground; that in the one case, as in the other, the single question for the moralist is, whether the repast on the whole produces more pleasure than pain, it must be owned that the discovery would have greatly facilitated his task.

The considerations I have adduced will, I think, be sufficient to show that the utilitarian principle, if pushed to its full

¹ Bentham especially recurs to this subject frequently. See Sir J. Bowring's edition of his works (Edinburgh, 1833), vol. i. pp. 142, 143, 562; vol. x. pp. 549-550.

² "Granted that any practice causes more pain to animals than it gives pleasure to man; is that practice moral or immoral? And if exactly in proportion as human beings raise their heads out of the slough of selfishness they do not with one voice answer 'immoral,' let the morality of the principle of utility be for ever condemned." (Mill's *Dissert.*, vol. ii. p. 483.) "We deprive them [animals] of life, and this is justifiable—their pains do not equal our enjoyments. There is a balance of good." (Bentham's *Deontology*, vol. i. p. 14.) Mr. Mill accordingly defines the principle of utility, without any special reference to man. "The creed which accepts, as the foundation of morals, utility or the greatest happiness principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness." (*Utilitarianism*, pp. 9-10.)

³ The exception of course being domestic animals, which may be injured by ill-treatment; but even this exception is a very partial one. No selfish reason could prevent any amount of cruelty to animals that were about to be killed, and even in the case of previous ill-usage the calculations of selfishness will depend greatly upon the price of the animal. I have been told that on some parts of the continent diligence horses are systematically under-fed, and worked to a speedy death, their cheapness rendering such a course the most economical.

⁴ Bentham, as we have seen, is of opinion that the gastronomic pleasure would produce the requisite excess of enjoyment. Hartley, who has some amiable and beautiful remarks on the duty of kindness to animals, without absolutely condemning, speaks with much aversion of the custom of eating "our brothers and sisters," the animals (*On Man*, vol. ii. pp. 222-223.) Paley, observing that it is quite possible for men to live without flesh-diet, concludes that the only sufficient justification for eating meat is an express divine revelation in the Book of Genesis. (*Moral Philos.*, book ii. ch. xi.) Some reasoners evade the man issue by contending that they kill animals because they would otherwise overrun the earth; but this, as Windham said, "is an indifferent reason for killing fish."

logical consequences, would be by no means as accordant with ordinary moral notions as is sometimes alleged; that it would, on the contrary, lead to conclusions utterly and outrageously repugnant to the moral feelings it is intended to explain. I will conclude this part of my argument by very briefly adverting to two great fields in which, as I believe, it would prove especially revolutionary.

The first of these is the field of chastity. It will be necessary for me in the course of the present work to dwell at greater length than I should desire upon questions connected with this virtue. At present, I will merely ask the reader to conceive a mind from which all notion of the intrinsic excellence or nobility of purity was banished, and to suppose such a mind comparing, by a utilitarian standard, a period in which sensuality was almost unbridled, such as the age of Athenian glory or the English Restoration, with a period of austere virtue. The question which of these societies was morally the best would thus resolve itself solely into the question in which there was produced the greatest amount of enjoyment and the smallest amount of suffering. The pleasures of domestic life, the pleasures resulting from a freer social intercourse,¹ the different degrees of suffering inflicted on those who violated the law of chastity, the ulterior consequences of each mode of life upon well-being and upon population, would be the chief elements of the comparison. Can anyone believe that the balance of enjoyment would be so unquestionably and so largely on the side of the more austere society as to justify the degree of superiority which is assigned to it?²

¹ In commenting upon the French licentiousness of the eighteenth century, Hume says, in a passage which has excited a great deal of animadversion: "Our neighbours, it seems, have resolved to sacrifice some of the domestic to the social pleasures, and to prefer ease, freedom, and an open commerce to strict fidelity and constancy. These ends are both good, and are somewhat difficult to reconcile; nor must we be surprised if the customs of nations incline too much sometimes to the one side, and sometimes to the other." (*Dialogue*.)

² There are few things more pitiable than the blunders into which writers have fallen when trying to base the plain virtue of chastity on utilitarian calculations. Thus since the writings of Malthus it has been generally recognised that one of the very first conditions of all material prosperity is to check early marriages, to restrain the tendency of population to multiply more rapidly than the means of subsistence. Knowing this what can be more deplorable than to find moralists making such arguments as these the very foundation of morals?—"The first and great mischief, and by consequence the guilt, of promiscuous concubinage consists in its tendency to diminish mar-

The second sphere is that of speculative truth. No class of men have more highly valued an unflinching hostility to superstition than utilitarians. Yet it is more than doubtful whether upon their principles it can be justified. Many superstitions do undoubtedly answer to the Greek conception of slavish "fear of the gods," and have been productive of unspeakable misery to mankind; but there are very many others of a different tendency. Superstitions appeal to our hopes as well as to our fears. They often meet and gratify the inmost longings of the heart. They offer certainties when reason can only afford possibilities or probabilities. They supply conceptions on which the imagination loves to dwell. They sometimes even impart a new sanction to moral truths. Creating wants which they alone can satisfy; and fears which they alone can quell, they often become essential elements of happiness, and their consoling efficacy is most felt in the languid or troubled hours when it is most needed. We owe more to our illusions than to our knowledge. The imagination, which is altogether constructive, probably contributes more to our happiness than the reason, which in the sphere of speculation is mainly critical and destructive. The rude charm which in the hour of danger or distress the savage clasps so confidently to his breast, the sacred picture which is believed to shed a hallowing and protecting influence over the poor man's cottage, can bestow a more real consolation in the darkest hour of human suffering than can be afforded by the grandest theories of philosophy. The first desire of the heart is to find something on which to lean. Happiness is a condition of feeling, not a condition of circumstances, and to common minds one of its first essentials is the exclusion of painful and harassing doubt. A system of belief may be false, superstitious, and reactionary, and may yet be conducive to human happiness if it

riages" (Paley's *Moral Philosophy*, book iii. part iii. ch. ii.) "That is always the most happy condition of a nation, and that nation is most accurately obeying the laws of our constitution, in which the number of the human race is most rapidly increasing. Now it is certain that under the law of chastity, that is, when individuals are exclusively united to each other, the increase of population will be more rapid than under any other circumstances" (Wayland's *Elements of Moral Science*, p. 298, 11th ed. Boston, 1839.) I am sorry to bring such subjects before the reader, but it is impossible to write a history of morals without doing so.

furnishes great multitudes of men with what they believe to be a key to the universe, if it consoles them in those seasons of agonising bereavement when the consolations of enlightened reason are but empty words, if it supports their feeble and tottering minds in the gloomy hours of sickness and of approaching death. A credulous and superstitious nature may be degraded, but in the many cases where superstition does not assume a persecuting or appalling form it is not unhappy, and degradation, apart from unhappiness, can have no place in utilitarian ethics. No error can be more grave than to imagine that when a critical spirit is abroad the pleasant beliefs will all remain, and the painful ones alone will perish. To introduce into the mind the consciousness of ignorance and the pangs of doubt is to inflict or endure much suffering, which may even survive the period of transition. "Why is it," said Luther's wife, looking sadly back upon the sensuous creed which she had left, "that in our old faith we prayed so often and so warmly, and that our prayers are now so few and so cold?"¹ It is related of an old monk named Serapion, who had embraced the heresy of the anthropomorphites, that he was convinced by a brother monk of the folly of attributing to the Almighty a human form. He bowed his reason humbly to the Catholic creed; but when he knelt down to pray, the image which his imagination had conceived, and on which for so many years his affections had been concentrated, had disappeared, and the old man burst into tears, exclaiming, "You have deprived me of my God."²

These are indeed facts which must be deeply painful to all who are concerned with the history of opinion. The possibility of often adding to the happiness of men by diffusing abroad, or at least sustaining pleasing falsehoods, and the suffering that must commonly result from their dissolution, can hardly reasonably be denied. There is one, and but one, adequate reason that can always justify men in critically reviewing what they have been taught. It is the conviction that opinions should not be regarded as mere mental luxuries, that truth should be deemed an end distinct from and superior to utility, and that it is a moral duty

to pursue it, whether it leads to pleasure or whether it leads to pain. Among the many wise sayings which antiquity ascribed to Pythagoras, few are more remarkable than his division of virtue into two distinct branches—to be truthful and to do good.³

Of the sanctions which, according to the utilitarians, constitute the sole motives to virtue, there is one, as I have said, unexceptionably adequate. Those who adopt the religious sanction can always appeal to a balance of interest in favour of virtue; but as the great majority of modern utilitarians confidently sever their theory from all theological considerations, I will dismiss this sanction with two or three remarks.

In the first place, it is obvious that those who regard the arbitrary will of the Deity as the sole rule of morals, render it perfectly idle to represent the Divine attributes as deserving of our admiration. To speak of the goodness of God, either implies that there is such a quality as goodness, to which the Divine acts conform, or it is an unmeaning tautology. Why should we extol, or how can we admire, the perfect goodness of a Being whose will and acts constitute the sole standard or definition of perfection? The theory which teaches that the arbitrary will of the Deity is the one rule of morals, and the anticipation of future rewards and punishments the one reason for conforming to it, consists of two parts. The first annihilates the goodness of God; the second, the virtue of man.

Another and equally obvious remark is, that while these theologians represent the hope of future rewards, and the fear of future punishments, as the only reason for doing right, one of our strongest reasons for believing in the existence of these rewards and punishments is our deep-seated feeling of merit and demerit. That the present disposition of affairs is

¹ Τὸ τε ἀληθεύειν καὶ τὸ εὐεργετεῖν. (Ælian, Var. Hist. xii. 59) Longinus in like manner divides virtue into εὐεργεσία καὶ ἀλήθεια. (De Sublim. § 1.) The opposite view in England is continually expressed in the saying, "You should never pull down an opinion until you have something to put in its place," which can only mean, if you are convinced that some religious or other hypothesis is false, you are morally bound to repress or conceal your conviction until you have discovered positive affirmations or explanations as unqualified and consolatory as those you have destroyed.

² See this powerfully stated by Shattisbury. (*Inquiry concerning Virtue*, book i. part ii.) The same objection applies to Dr. Mansel's modification of the theological doctrine—viz., that the origin of morals is not the will but the nature of God.

³ See Luther's *Table Talk*.

⁴ Tillemont, *Mémoires pour servir à l'Hist. ecclesiastique*, tome x. p. 57.

in many respects unjust, that suffering often attends a course which deserves reward, and happiness a course which deserves punishment, leads men to infer a future state of retribution. Take away the consciousness of desert, and the inference would no longer be made.

A third remark, which I believe to be equally true, but which may not be acquiesced in with equal readiness, is that without the concurrence of a moral faculty it is wholly impossible to prove from nature that supreme goodness of the Creator which utilitarian theologians assume. We speak of the benevolence shown in the joy of the insect glittering in the sunbeam, in the protecting instincts so liberally bestowed among the animal world, in the kindness of the parent to its young, in the happiness of little children, in the beauty and the bounty of nature; but is there not another side to the picture? The hideous disease, the countless forms of rapine and of suffering, the entozoa that live within the bodies and feed upon the anguish of sentient beings, the ferocious instinct of the cat that prolongs with delight the agonies of its victim, all the multitudinous forms of misery that are manifested among the innocent portion of creation, are not these also the works of nature? We speak of the Divine veracity. What is the whole history of the intellectual progress of the world but one long struggle of the intellect of man to emancipate itself from the deceptions of nature? Every object that meets the eye of the savage awakens his curiosity only to lure him into some deadly error. The sun that seems a diminutive light revolving around his world; the moon and the stars that appear formed only to light his path; the strange fantastic diseases that suggest irresistibly the notion of present dæmons; the terrific phenomena of nature which appear the results, not of blind forces, but of isolated spiritual agencies—all these things fatally, inevitably, invincibly impel him into superstition. Through long centuries the superstitions thus generated have deluged the world with blood. Millions of prayers have been vainly breathed to what we now know were inexorable laws of nature. Only after ages of toil did the mind of man emancipate itself from those deadly errors to which by the deceptive appearances of nature the long infancy of humanity is universally doomed.

And, in the laws of wealth how different are the appearances from the realities of things! Who can estimate the wars that have been kindled, the bitterness and the wretchedness that have been caused, by errors relating to the apparent antagonism of the interests of nations which were so natural that for centuries they entangled the very strongest intellects, and it was scarcely till our own day that a tardy science came to dispel them?

What shall we say to these things? If induction alone were our guide, if we possessed absolutely no knowledge of some things being in their own nature good, and others in their own nature evil, how could we rise from this spectacle of nature to the conception of an all-perfect Author? Even if we could discover a predominance of benevolence in the creation, we should still regard the mingled attributes of nature as a reflex of the mingled attributes of its Contriver. Our knowledge of the Supreme Excellence, our best evidence even of the existence of the Creator, is derived not from the material universe but from our own moral nature.¹ It is not of reason but of faith. In other words, it springs from that instinctive or moral nature which is as truly a part of our being as is our reason, which teaches us what reason could never teach, the supreme and transcendent excellence of moral good, which, rising dissatisfied above this world of sense, proves itself by the very intensity of its aspiration to be adapted for another sphere, and which constitutes at once the evidence of a Divine element within us, and the augury of the future that is before us.²

These things belong rather to the sphere of feeling than of reasoning. Those who are most deeply persuaded of their truth, will probably feel that they are unable by argument to express adequately the intensity of their conviction, but they may point to the recorded experience of the best and greatest men in all ages, to the incapacity of terrestrial things to satisfy our nature, to the mani-

¹ "The one great and binding ground of the belief of God and a hereafter is the law of conscience." (Coleridge, *Notes Theological and Political*, p. 367.) That our moral faculty is our one reason for maintaining the supreme benevolence of the Deity was a favourite position of Kant.

² "Nescio quomodo inhaeret in mentibus quasi saeculorum quoddam augurium futurorum; idque in maximis ingenis altissimisque animis et existit maxime et apparet facillime." (Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* 1 14.)

fest tendency, both in individuals and nations, of a pure and heroic life to kindle, and of a selfish and corrupt life to cloud, these aspirations, to the historical fact that no philosophy and no scepticism have been able permanently to repress them. The lines of our moral nature tend upwards. In it we have the common root of religion and of ethics, for the same consciousness that tells us that, even when it is in fact the weakest element of our constitution, it is by right supreme, commanding and authoritative, teaches us also that it is Divine. All the nobler religions that have governed mankind, have done so by virtue of the affinity of their teaching with this nature, by speaking, as common religious language correctly describes it, "to the heart," by appealing not to self-interest, but to that Divine element of self-sacrifice which is latent in every soul.¹ The reality of this moral nature is the one great question of natural theology, for it involves that connection between our own and a higher nature, without which the existence of a First Cause were a mere question of archæology, and religion but an exercise of the imagination.

I return gladly to the secular sanctions of utilitarianism. The majority of its disciples assure us that these are sufficient to establish their theory, or, in other words, that our duty coincides so strictly with our interest, when rightly understood, that a perfectly prudent would necessarily become a perfectly virtuous man.² Bodily vice, they tell us, ultimately brings bodily weakness and suffering. Extravagance is followed by ruin; unbridled passions by the loss of domestic peace; disregard for the interests of others by social or legal penalties; while on the other hand, the most moral is also the most tranquil

disposition, benevolence is one of the truest of our pleasures, and virtue may become by habit an essential of enjoyment. As the shopkeeper who has made his fortune, still sometimes continues at the counter, because the daily routine has become necessary to his happiness, so the "moral hero" may continue to practice that virtue which was at first the mere instrument of his pleasures, as being in itself more precious than all besides.³

This theory of the perfect coincidence of virtue and interest rightly understood, which has always been a commonplace of moralists, and has been advocated by many who were far from wishing to resolve virtue into prudence, contains no doubt a certain amount of truth, but only of the most general kind. It does not apply to nations as wholes, for although luxurious and effeminate vices do undoubtedly corrode and enervate national character, the histories of ancient Rome and of not a few modern monarchies abundantly prove that a career of consistent rapacity, ambition, selfishness, and fraud may be eminently conducive to national prosperity.⁴ It does not apply to imperfectly organised societies, where the restraints of public opinion are unfelt and where force is the one measure of right. It does not apply except in a very partial degree even to the most civilised of mankind. It is, indeed, easy to show that in a polished community a certain low standard of virtue is essential to prosperity, to paint the evils of unrestrained passions, and to prove that it is better to obey than to violate the laws of society. But if, turning from the criminal or the drunkard, we were to compare the man who simply falls in with or slightly sur-

¹ "It is a calumny to say that men are roused to heroic actions by ease, hope of pleasure, recompense—sugar-plums of any kind in this world or the next. In the meanest mortal there lies something nobler. The poor swearing soldier lured to be shot has his 'honour of a soldier,' different from drill, regulations, and the shilling a day. It is not to taste sweet things, but to do noble and true things, and vindicate himself under God's heaven as a God-made man, that the poorest son of Adam dimly longs. Show him the way of doing that, the dullest day-drudge kindles into a hero. They wrong man greatly who say he is to be seduced by ease. Difficulty, abnegation, martyrdom, death, are the allurements that act on the heart of man. Kindle the inner genial life of him, you have a flame that burns up all lower considerations." (Carlyle's *Hero-worship*, p. 237, ed. 1853)

² "Clamat Epicurus, is quem vos nimis voluptatibus esse deditum dicitis, non posse jucunde vivi nisi sapienter, honeste, justeque vivatur, nec sapienter, honeste, juste nisi jucunde." (Cicero, *De Fin.* l. 1, §.)

³ "The virtues to be complete must have fixed their residence in the heart and become appetites impelling to actions without further thought than the gratification of them; so that after their expedience ceases they still continue to operate by the desire they raise."

I knew a mercer who, having gotten a competency of fortune, thought to retire and enjoy himself in quiet; but, finding he could not be easy without business, was forced to return to the shop and assist his former partners gratis in the nature of a journeyman. Why then should it be thought strange that a man long inured to the practice of moral duties should persevere in them out of liking, when they can yield him no further advantage? (Tucker's *Light of Nature*, vol. 1, p. 269.) Mr. J. S. Mill, in his *Utilitarianism*, dwells much on the heroism which he thinks this view of morals may produce.

⁴ See Lactantius, *Inst. Div.* vi. 9. Montesquieu, in his *Décadence de l'Empire romain*, has shown in detail the manner in which the crimes of Roman politicians contributed to the greatness of their nation. Modern history furnishes only too many illustrations of the same truth.

passes the average morals of those about him, and indulges in a little vice which is neither injurious to his own health nor to his reputation, with the man who earnestly and painfully adopts a much higher standard than that of his time or of his class, we should be driven to another conclusion. Honesty, it is said, is the best policy—a fact, however, which depends very much upon the condition of the police force—but heroic virtue must rest upon a different basis. If happiness in any of its forms be the supreme object of life, moderation is the most emphatic counsel of our being; but moderation is as opposed to heroism as to vice. There is no form of intellectual or moral excellence which has not a general tendency to produce happiness if cultivated in moderation. There are very few which, if cultivated to great perfection, have not a tendency directly the reverse. Thus a mind that is sufficiently enlarged to range abroad amid the pleasures of intellect has no doubt secured a fund of inexhaustible enjoyment; but he who inferred from this that the highest intellectual eminence was the condition most favourable to happiness would be lamentably deceived. The diseased nervous sensibility that accompanies intense mental exertion, the weary, wasting sense of ignorance and vanity, the disenchantment and disintegration that commonly follow a profound research, have filled literature with mournful echoes of the words of the royal sage, "In much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." The lives of men of genius have been for the most part a conscious and deliberate realisation of the ancient myth—the tree of knowledge and the tree of life stood side by side, and they chose the tree of knowledge rather than the tree of life.

Nor is it otherwise in the realm of morals.¹ The virtue which is most conducive to happiness is plainly that which can be realised without much suffering, and sustained without much effort. Legal and physical penalties apply only to the grosser and more extreme forms of vice. Social penalties may strike the very highest forms of virtue.² That very

sentiment of unity with mankind which utilitarians assure us is one day to become so strong as to overpower all unsocial feelings, would make it more and more impossible for men consistently with their happiness to adopt any course, whether very virtuous or very vicious, that would place them out of harmony with the general sentiment of society. It may be said that the tranquillity of a perfectly virtuous mind is the highest form of happiness, and may be reasonably preferred, not only to material advantages, but also to the approbation of society; but no man can fully attain, and few can even approximate, to such a condition. When vicious passions and impulses are very strong, it is idle to tell the sufferer that he would be more happy if his nature were radically different from what it is. If happiness be his object, he must regulate his course with a view to the actual condition of his being, and there can be little doubt that his peace would be most promoted by a compromise with vice. The selfish theory of morals applies only to the virtues of temperament, and not to that much higher form of virtue which is sustained in defiance of temperament.³ We have no doubt a certain pleasure in cultivating our good tendencies, but we have by no means the same pleasure in repressing our bad ones. There are men whose whole lives are spent in willing one thing and desiring the opposite. In such cases as these virtue clearly involves a sacrifice of happiness; for the suffering caused by resisting natural tendencies is much greater than would ensue from their moderate gratification.

The plain truth is that no proposition can be more palpably and egregiously false than the assertion that, as far as this world is concerned, it is invariably conducive to the happiness of a man to pursue the most virtuous career. Circumstances and disposition will make one man find his highest happiness in the happiness, and another man in the misery, of his kind; and if the second man acts according to his interest, the utilitarian, however much he may deplore the result, has no right to blame or condemn the

¹ "That quick sensibility which is the groundwork of all advances towards perfection increases the pungency of pains and vexations." (Tucker's *Light of Nature*, ii. 16, § 4.)

² This position is forcibly illustrated by Mr. Maurice in his fourth lecture *On Conscience* (1868). It is manifest that a tradesman resisting a dishonest or illegal

trade custom, an Irish peasant in a disturbed district revolting against the agrarian conspiracy of his class, or a soldier in many countries conscientiously refusing in obedience to the law to fight a duel, would incur the full force of social penalties, because he failed to do that which was illegal or criminal.

³ See Brown *On the Characteristics*, pp. 206–209.

agent. For that agent is following his greatest happiness, and this, in the eyes of utilitarians, in one form or another, is the highest, or to speak more accurately the only, motive by which human nature can be actuated.

We may remark too that the disturbance or pain which does undoubtedly usually accompany what is evil bears no kind of proportion to the enormity of the guilt. An irritability of temper, which is chiefly due to a derangement of the nervous system, or a habit of procrastination or indecision, will often cause more suffering than some of the worst vices that can corrupt the heart.¹

But it may be said this calculation of pains and pleasures is defective through the omission of one element. Although a man who had a very strong natural impulse towards some vice would appear more likely to promote the tranquillity of his nature by a moderate and circumspect gratification of that vice, than by endeavouring painfully to repress his natural tendencies, yet he possesses a conscience which adjudicates upon his conduct, and its sting or its approval constitutes a pain or pleasure so intense as more than to redress the balance. Now, of course, no intuitive moralist will deny, what for a long time his school may be almost said to have been alone in asserting, the reality of conscience, or the pleasures and pains it may afford. He simply denies, and he appeals to consciousness in attestation of his position, that those pains and pleasures are so powerful or so proportioned to our acts as to become an adequate basis for virtue. Conscience, whether we regard it as an original faculty or as a product of the association of ideas, exercises two distinct functions. It points out a difference between right and wrong, and when its commands are violated it inflicts a certain amount of suffering and disturbance. The first function it exercises persistently through life. The second it only exercises under certain special circumstances. It is scarcely conceivable that a man in the possession of his faculties should pass a life of gross depravity

and crime without being conscious that he was doing wrong; but it is extremely possible for him to do so without this consciousness having any appreciable influence upon his tranquillity. The condition of their consciences, as Mr. Carlyle observes, has less influence on the happiness of men than the condition of their livers. Considered as a source of pain, conscience bears a striking resemblance to the feeling of disgust. Notwithstanding the assertion of Dr. Johnson, I venture to maintain that there are multitudes to whom the necessity of discharging the duties of a butcher would be so inexpressibly painful and revolting that, if they could obtain flesh diet on no other condition, they would relinquish it for ever. But to those who are inured to the trade this repugnance has simply ceased. It has no place in their emotions or calculations. Nor can it be reasonably questioned that most men, by an assiduous attendance at the slaughter-house, could acquire a similar indifference. In like manner, the reproaches of conscience are doubtless a very real and important form of suffering to a sensitive, scrupulous, and virtuous girl who has committed some trivial act of levity or disobedience; but to an old and hardened criminal they are a matter of the most absolute indifference.

Now it is undoubtedly conceivable that by an association of ideas men might acquire a feeling that would cause that which would naturally be painful to them to be pleasurable, and that which would naturally be pleasurable to be painful.² But the question will immediately arise, Why should they respect this feeling? We have seen that, according to the inductive theory, there is no such thing as natural

¹ At the same time, the following passage contains, I think, a great deal of wisdom, and of a kind peculiarly needed in England at the present day: "The nature of the subject furnishes the strongest presumption that no better system will ever, for the future, be invented, in order to account for the origin of the benevolent from the selfish affection, and reduce all the various emotions of the human mind to a perfect simplicity. The case is not the same in this species of philosophy as in physics. Many an hypothesis in nature, contrary to first appearances, has been found, on more accurate scrutiny, solid and satisfactory. But the presumption always lies on the other side in all enquiries concerning the origin of our passions, and of the internal operations of the human mind. The simplest and most obvious cause which can there be assigned for any phenomenon is probably the true one."

The affections are not susceptible of any impression from the refinements of reason or imagination; and it is always found that a vigorous exertion of the latter faculties, necessarily, from the narrow capacity of the human mind, destroys all activity in the former." (Hume's *Enquiry concerning Morals*, Appendix. II.)

² "A toothache produces more violent convulsions of pain than a phtisis or a dropsy. A gloomy disposition ... may be found in very worthy characters, though it is sufficient alone to embitter life. A selfish villain may possess a spring and alacrity of temper, which is indeed a good quality, but which is rewarded much beyond its merit, and when attended with good fortune will compensate for the uneasiness and remorse arising from all the other vices." (Hume's *Essays: The Sceptic*)

duty. Men enter into life solely desirous of seeking their own happiness. The whole edifice of virtue arises from the observed fact that, owing to the constitution of our nature and the intimacy of our social relations, it is necessary for our happiness to abstain from some courses that would be immediately pleasurable, and to pursue others that are immediately the reverse. Self-interest is the one ultimate reason for virtue, however much the moral chemistry of Hartley may disguise and transform it. Ought, or ought not, means nothing more than the prospect of acquiring or of losing pleasure. The fact that one line of conduct promotes, and another impairs, the happiness of others is, according to these moralists, in the last analysis, no reason whatever for pursuing the former or avoiding the latter, unless such a course is that which brings us the greatest happiness. The happiness may arise from the action of society upon ourselves, or from our own naturally benevolent disposition, or, again, from an association of ideas, which means the force of a habit we have formed; but in any case our own happiness is the one possible or conceivable motive of action. If this be a true picture of human nature, the reasonable course for every man is to modify his disposition in such a manner that he may attain the greatest possible amount of enjoyment. If he has formed an association of ideas, or contracted a habit which inflicts more pain than it prevents, or prevents more pleasure than it affords, his reasonable course is to dissolve that association, to destroy that habit. This is what he "ought" to do according to the only meaning that word can possess in the utilitarian vocabulary. If he does not, he will justly incur the charge of imprudence, which is the only charge utilitarianism can consistently bring against vice.

That it would be for the happiness as it would certainly be in the power of a man of a temperament such as I have lately described, to quench that conscientious feeling, which by its painful reproaches prevents him from pursuing the course that would be most conducive to his tranquillity, I conceive to be self-evident. And, indeed, on the whole, it is more than doubtful whether conscience, considered apart from the course of action it prescribes, is not the cause of more pain than pleasure. Its reproaches are more felt than its approval. The self-compla-

cency of a virtuous man, reflecting with delight upon his own exceeding merit, is frequently spoken of in the writings of moral philosophers,¹ but is rarely found in actual life, where the most tranquil is seldom the most perfect nature, where the sensitiveness of conscience increases at least in proportion to moral growth, and where in the best men a feeling of modesty and humility is always present to check the exuberance of self-gratulation.

In every sound system of morals and religion the motives of virtue become more powerful the more the mind is concentrated upon them. It is when they are lost sight of, when they are obscured by passion, unrealised or forgotten, that they cease to operate. But it is a peculiarity of the utilitarian conception of virtue that it is wholly unable to resist the solvent of analysis, and that the more the mind realises its origin and its nature, the more its influence on character must decline. The pleasures of the senses will always defy the force of analysis, for they have a real foundation in our being. They have their basis in the eternal nature of things. But the pleasure we derive from the practice of virtue rests, according to this school, on a wholly different basis. It is

¹ "The pleasing consciousness and self-approbation that rise up in the mind of a virtuous man, exclusively of any direct, explicit consideration of advantage likely to accrue to himself from his possession of those good qualities" (Hartley, *On Man*, vol. 1. p. 493), form a theme upon which moralists of both schools are fond of dilating, in a strain that reminds one irresistibly of the self-complacency of a famous nursery hero, while reflecting upon his own merits over a Christmas-pie. Thus Adam Smith says, "The man who, not from frivolous fancy, but from proper motives, has performed a generous action, when he looks forward to those whom he has served, feels himself to be the natural object of their love and gratitude, and, by sympathy with them, of the esteem and approbation of all mankind. And when he looks backward to the motive from which he acted, and surveys it in the light in which the indifferent spectator will survey it, he still continues to enter into it, and applauds himself by sympathy with the approbation of this supposed impartial judge. In both these points of view his conduct appears to him every way agreeable. Misery and wretchedness can never enter the breast in which dwells complete self-satisfaction" (*Theory of Moral Sentiments*, part II. ch. II. § 2; part III. ch. III.) I suspect that many moralists confuse the self-gratulation which they suppose a virtuous man to feel with the delight a religious man experiences from the sense of the protection and favour of the Deity. But these two feelings are clearly distinct, and it will, I believe, be found that the latter is most strongly experienced by the very men who most sincerely disclaim all sense of merit. "Were the perfect man to exist," said that good and great writer, Archer Butler, "he himself would be the last to know it; for the highest stage of advancement is the lowest descent in humility." At all events, the reader will observe that on utilitarian principles nothing could be more pernicious or criminal than that modest, humble, and diffident spirit, which diminishes the pleasure of self-gratulation, one of the highest utilitarian motives to virtue.

the result of casual and artificial association, of habit, of a confusion by the imagination of means with ends, of a certain dignity with which society invests qualities or actions that are useful to itself. Just in proportion as this is felt, just in proportion as the mind separates the idea of virtue from that of natural excellence and obligation, and realises the purely artificial character of the connection, just in that proportion will the coercive power of the moral motive be destroyed. The utilitarian rule of judging actions and dispositions by their tendency to promote or diminish happiness, or the maxim of Kant that man should always act so that the rule of his conduct might be adopted as a law by all rational beings, may be very useful as a guide in life; but in order that they should acquire moral weight, it is necessary to presuppose the sense of moral obligation, the consciousness that duty, when discovered, has a legitimate claim to be the guiding principle of our lives. And it is this element which, in the eye of reason, the mere artificial association of ideas can never furnish.

If the patience of the reader has enabled him to accompany me through this long train of tedious arguments, he will, I think, have concluded that the utilitarian theory, though undoubtedly held by many men of the purest and by some men of almost heroic virtue, would, if carried to its logical conclusions, prove subversive of morality, and especially, and in the very highest degree, unfavourable to self-denial and to heroism. Even if it explains these, it fails to justify them; and conscience, being traced to a mere confusion of the means of happiness with its end, would be wholly unable to resist the solvent of criticism. That this theory of conscience gives a true or adequate description of the phenomenon it seeks to explain, no intuitive moralist will admit. It is a complete, though common, mistake to suppose that the business of the moralist is merely to explain the genesis of certain feelings we possess. At the root of all morals lies an intellectual judgment which is clearly distinct from liking or disliking, from pleasure or from pain. A man who has injured his position by some foolish but perfectly innocent act, or who has inadvertently violated some social rule, may experience an emotion of self-reproach or of shame quite as acute as if he had committed a crime. But he is at the same time clearly

conscious that his conduct is not a fit subject for moral reprobation, that the grounds on which it may be condemned are of a different and of a lower kind. The sense of obligation and of legitimate supremacy, which is the essential and characteristic feature of conscience, and which distinguishes it from all the other parts of our nature, is wholly unaccounted for by the association of ideas. To say that a certain course of conduct is pleasing, and that a certain amount of pain results from the weakening of feelings that impel men towards it, is plainly different from what men mean when they say we ought to pursue it. The virtue of Hartley is, in its last analysis, but a disease of the imagination. It may be more advantageous to society than avarice; but it is formed in the same manner, and has exactly the same degree of binding force.¹

These considerations will help to supply an answer to the common utilitarian objection that to speak of duty as distinct from self-interest is unmeaning, because it is absurd to say that we are under an obligation to do anything when no evil consequences would result to us from not doing it. Rewards and punishments, it may be answered, are undoubtedly necessary to enforce, but they are not necessary to constitute, duty. This distinction, whether it be real or not, has at all events the advantage of appearing self-evident to all who are not philosophers. Thus,

¹ Hartley has tried in one place to evade this conclusion by an appeal to the doctrine of final causes. He says that the fact that conscience is not an original principle of our nature, but is formed mechanically in the manner I have described, does not invalidate the fact that it is intended for our guide, "for all the things which have evident final causes are plainly brought about by mechanical means"; and he appeals to the milk in the breast, which is intended for the sustenance of the young, but which is nevertheless mechanically produced. (*On Man*, vol. i. pp. 338-339.) But it is plain that this mode of reasoning would justify us in attributing an authoritative character to any habit—e.g., to that of avarice—which these writers assure us is in the manner of its formation an exact parallel to conscience. The later followers of Hartley certainly cannot be accused of any excessive predilection for the doctrine of final causes, yet we sometimes find them asking what great difference it can make whether (when conscience is admitted by both parties to be real) it is regarded as an original principle of our nature or as a product of association? Simply this. If by the constitution of our nature we are subject to a law of duty which is different from and higher than our interest, a man who violates this law through interested motives is deserving of reprobation. If on the other hand there is no natural law of duty, and if the pursuit of our interest is the one original principle of our being, no one can be censured who pursues it, and the first criterion of a wise man will be his determination to eradicate every habit (conscientious or otherwise) which impedes him in doing so.

when a party of colonists occupy a new territory, they divide the unoccupied land among themselves, and they murder, or employ for the gratification of their lusts, the savage inhabitants. Both acts are done with perfect impunity, but one is felt to be innocent and the other wrong. A lawful government appropriates the land and protects the aborigines, supporting its enactments by penalties. In the one case the law both creates and enforces a duty, in the other it only enforces it. The intuitive moralist simply asserts that we have the power of perceiving that certain courses of action are higher, nobler, and better than others, and that by the constitution of our being, this fact, which is generically distinct from the prospect of pleasure or the reverse, may and ought to be, and continually is, a motive of action. It is no doubt possible for a man to prefer the lower course, and in this case we say he is deserving of punishment, and if he remains unpunished we say that it is unjust. But if there were no power to reward or punish him, his acts would not be indifferent. They would still be intelligibly described as essentially base or noble, shameful though there were none to censure, admirable though there were none to admire.

That men have the power of preferring other objects than happiness is a proposition which must ultimately be left to the attestation of consciousness. That the pursuit of virtue, however much happiness may eventually follow in its train, is, in the first instance, an example of this preference, must be established by that common voice of mankind which has invariably regarded a virtuous motive as generically different from an interested one. And, indeed, even when the conflict between strong passions and a strong sense of duty does not exist, it is impossible to measure the degrees of virtue by the scale of enjoyment. The highest nature is rarely the happiest. Petronius Arbiter was, very probably, a happier man than Marcus Aurelius. For eighteen centuries the religious instinct of Christendom has recognised its ideal in the form of a "Man of Sorrows."

Considerations such as I have now urged lead the intuitive moralists to reject the principles of the utilitarian. They acknowledge, indeed, that the effect of actions upon the happiness of mankind forms a most important element in deter-

mining their moral quality, but they maintain that without natural moral perceptions we never should have known that it was our duty to seek the happiness of mankind when it diverged from our own, and they deny that virtue was either originally evolved from, or is necessarily proportioned to, utility. They acknowledge that in the existing condition of society there is at least a general coincidence between the paths of virtue and of prosperity, but they contend that the obligation of virtue is of such a nature that no conceivable convulsion of affairs could destroy it, and that it would continue even if the government of the world belonged to supreme malice instead of supreme benevolence. Virtue, they believe, is something more than a calculation or a habit. It is impossible to conceive its fundamental principles reversed. Notwithstanding the strong tendency to confuse cognate feelings, the sense of duty and the sense of utility remain perfectly distinct in the apprehension of mankind, and we are quite capable of recognising each separate ingredient in the same act. Our respect for a gallant but dangerous enemy, our contempt for a useful traitor, our care in the last moments of life for the interests of those who survive us, our clear distinction between intentional and unintentional injuries, and between the consciousness of imprudence and the consciousness of guilt, our conviction that the pursuit of interest should always be checked by a sense of duty, and that selfish and moral motives are so essentially opposed that the presence of the former necessarily weakens the latter, our indignation at those who, when honour or gratitude call them to sacrifice their interests, pause to calculate remote consequences, the feeling of remorse which differs from every other emotion of our nature—in a word, the universal, unstudied sentiments of mankind all concur in leading us to separate widely our virtuous affections from our selfish ones. Just as pleasure and pain are ultimate grounds of action, and no reason can be given why we should seek the former and avoid the latter, except that it is the constitution of our nature that we should do so, so we are conscious that the words right and wrong express ultimate intelligible motives, that these motives are generically different from the others, that they are of a higher order, and that they carry with them a sense of

obligation. Any scheme of morals that omits these facts fails to give an accurate and adequate description of the states of feeling which consciousness reveals. The consciences of men in every age would have echoed the assertion of Cicero that to sacrifice pleasure with a view of obtaining any form or modification of pleasure in return, no more answers to our idea of virtue than to lend money at interest to our idea of charity. The conception of pure disinterestedness is presupposed in our estimates of virtue. It is the root of all the emotions with which we contemplate acts of heroism. We feel that man is capable of pursuing what he believes to be right although pain and disaster and mental suffering and an early death be the consequence, and although no prospect of future reward lighten upon his tomb. This is the highest prerogative of our being, the point of contact between the human nature and the divine.

In addition to the direct arguments in its support, the utilitarian school owes much of its influence to some very powerful moral and intellectual predispositions in its favour—the first, which we shall hereafter examine, consisting of the tendency manifested in certain conditions of society towards the qualities it is most calculated to produce, and the second, of the almost irresistible attraction which unity and precision exercise on many minds. It was this desire to simplify human nature, by reducing its various faculties and complex operations to a single principle or process, that gave its great popularity to the sensational school of the last [the eighteenth] century. It led most metaphysicians of that school to deny the duality of human nature. It led Bonnet and Condillac to propose an animated statue, endowed with the five senses as channels of ideas, and with faculties exclusively employed in transforming the products of sensation, as a perfect representative of humanity. It led Helvétius to assert that the original faculties of all men were precisely the same, all the difference between what we call genius and what we call stupidity arising from differences of circumstances, and all the difference between men and animals arising mainly from the structure of the human hand. In morals, theories of unification are peculiarly plausible, and I think peculiarly dangerous, because, owing to the interaction of our moral sentiments, and the many transforma-

tions that each can undergo, there are few affections that might not under some conceivable circumstances become the parents of every other. When Hobbes, in the name of the philosophy of self-interest, contended that "Pity is but the imagination of future calamity to ourselves, produced by the sense of another man's calamity;"¹ when Hutcheson, in the name of the philosophy of benevolence, argued that the vice of intemperance is that it impels us to violence towards others, and weakens our capacity for doing them good;² when other moralists, defending the excellence of our nature, maintained that compassion is so emphatically the highest of our pleasures that a desire of gratifying it is the cause of our acts of barbarity;³ each of these theories, extravagant as it is, contains a germ of undoubted psychological truth. It is true that a mind intensely apprehensive of future calamities would on that account

¹ *On Human Nature*, chap. iv. § 10.

² *Enquiry concerning Good and Evil*.

³ This theory is noticed by Hutcheson, and a writer in the *Spectator* (No. 436) suggests that it may explain the attraction of prize-fights. The case of the pleasure derived from fictitious sorrow is a distinct question, and has been admirably treated in Lord Kames' *Essays on Morality*. Bishop Butler notices (*Second Sermon on Compassion*) that it is possible for the very intensity of a feeling of compassion to divert men from charity by making them "industriously turn away from the miserable", and it is well known that Goethe, on account of this very susceptibility, made it one of the rules of his life to avoid everything that could suggest painful ideas. Hobbes makes the following very characteristic comments on some famous lines of Lucretius: "From what passion proceedeth it that men take pleasure to behold from the shore the danger of those that are at sea in a tempest or in fight, or from a safe castle to behold two armies charge one another in the field? It is certainly in the whole sum joy, else men would never flock to such a spectacle. Nevertheless, there is both joy and grief, for as there is novelty and remembrance of our own security present, which is delight, so there is also pity, which is grief. But the delight is so far predominant that men usually are content in such a case to be spectators of the misery of their friends." (*On Human Nature*, ch. ix. § 19.) Good Christians, according to some theologians, are expected to enjoy this pleasure in great perfection in heaven. "We may believe in the next world also the goodness as well as the happiness of the best will be confirmed and advanced by reflections naturally arising from the view of the misery which some shall undergo, which seems to be a good reason for the creation of those beings who shall be finally miserable, and for the continuation of them in their miserable existence. Though in one respect the view of the misery which the damned undergo might seem to detract from the happiness of the blessed through pity and commiseration, yet under another, a nearer and much more affecting consideration—viz., that all this is the misery they themselves were often exposed to and in danger of incurring, why may not the sense of their own escape so far overcome the sense of another's ruin as quite to extinguish the pain that usually attends the idea of it, and even render it productive of some real happiness? To this purpose, Lucretius' *Suave mari*, etc. (Law's notes to his Translation of King's *Origin of Evil*, pp. 477, 479.)

receive a shock at the sight of the calamities of others. It is true that a very keen and absorbing sentiment of benevolence would be in itself sufficient to divert men from any habit that impaired their power of gratifying it. It is true that compassion involves a certain amount of pleasure, and conceivable that that pleasure might be so intensified that we might seek it by a crime. The error in these theories is not that they exaggerate the possible efficacy of the motives, but that they exaggerate their actual intensity in human nature, and describe falsely the process by which the results they seek to explain have been arrived at. The function of observation in moral philosophy is not simply to attest the moral sentiments we possess, leaving it to the reason to determine deductively how they may have been formed; it is rather to follow them through all the stages of their formation.

And here I may observe that the term inductive, like most others that are employed in moral philosophy, may give rise to serious misconception. It is properly applied to those moralists who, disbelieving the existence of any moral sense or faculty revealing to us what is right and wrong, maintain that the origin of those ideas is simply our experience of the tendency of different lines of conduct to promote or impair true happiness. It appears, however, to be sometimes imagined that inductive moralists alone think that it is by induction or experience that we ought to ascertain what is the origin of our moral ideas. But this I conceive to be a complete mistake. The basis of morals is a distinct question from the basis of theories of morals. Those who maintain the existence of a moral faculty do not, as is sometimes said, assume this proposition as a first principle of their arguments, but they arrive at it by a process of induction quite as severe as any that can be employed by their opponents.¹ They examine, analyse, and classify their existing moral feelings, ascertain in what respects those feelings agree with or differ from others, trace them through their various phases, and only assign them to a special faculty when they think they have shown them to be incapable of resolution, and generically different from all others.²

This separation is all that is meant by a moral faculty. We are apt to regard the term as implying a distinct and well-defined organ, bearing to the mind the same kind of relation as a limb to the body. But of the existence of such organs, and of the propriety of such material imagery, we know nothing. Perceiving in ourselves a will, and a crowd of intellectual and emotional phenomena that seem wholly different from the properties of matter, we infer the existence of an immaterial substance which wills, thinks, and feels, and can classify its own operations with considerable precision. The term faculty is simply an expression of classification. If we say that the moral faculty differs from the æsthetic faculty, we can only mean that the mind forms certain judgments of moral excellence, and also certain judgments of beauty, and that these two mental processes are clearly distinct. To ask to what part of our nature moral perceptions should be attributed is only

found running through a great part of what Mr. Buckle has written upon morals—I think the weakest portion of his great work. See, for example, an elaborate confusion on the subject, *History of Civilisation*, vol. ii. p. 429. Mr. Buckle maintains that all the philosophers of what is commonly called "the Scotch school" (a school founded by the Irishman Hutcheson, and to which Hume does not belong) were incapable of inductive reasoning, because they maintained the existence of a moral sense or faculty, or of first principles, incapable of resolution, and he enters into a learned enquiry into the causes which made it impossible for Scotch writers to pursue or appreciate the inductive method. It is curious to contrast this view with the language of one who, whatever may be the value of his original speculations, is, I conceive, among the very ablest philosophical critics of the present [nineteenth] century. "Les philosophes écossais adoptèrent les procédés que Bacon avait recommandé d'appliquer à l'étude du monde physique, et les transportèrent dans l'étude du monde moral. Ils firent voir que l'induction baconienne, c'est-à-dire, l'induction précédée d'une observation scrupuleuse des phénomènes, est en philosophie comme en physique la seule méthode légitime. C'est un de leurs titres les plus honorables d'avoir insisté sur cette démonstration, et d'avoir en même temps joint l'exemple au précepte. Il est vrai que le zèle des philosophes écossais en faveur de la méthode d'observation leur a presque fait dépasser le but. Ils ont incliné à renfermer la psychologie dans la description minutieuse et continue de phénomènes de l'âme, sans réfléchir assez que cette description doit faire place à l'induction et au raisonnement déductif, et qu'une philosophie qui se bornerait à l'observation serait aussi stérile que celle qui s'amuserait à construire des hypothèses sans avoir préalablement observé." (Cousin, *Hist. de la Philos. Morale au XVIII^e Siècle*, Tome 4, pp. 14-16.) Dugald Stewart had said much the same thing, but he was a Scotchman, and therefore, according to Mr. Buckle (*Hist. of Civ.*, vol. ii. pp. 485-486), incapable of understanding what induction was. I may add that one of the principal objections M. Cousin makes against Locke is that he investigated the origin of our ideas before analysing minutely their nature, and the propriety of this method is one of the points on which Mr. Mill (*Examination of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy*) is at issue with M. Cousin.

¹ See, e.g., Reid's *Essays on the Active Powers*, essay iii. ch. v.

² The error I have traced in this paragraph will be

to ask to what train of mental phenomena they bear the closest resemblance.

If this simple, but often neglected, consideration be borne in mind, the apparent discordance of intuitive moralists will appear less profound than might at first sight be supposed, for each section merely elucidates some one characteristic of moral judgments. Thus Butler insists upon the sense of obligation that is involved in them, contends that this separates them from all other sentiments, and assigns them in consequence to a special faculty of supreme authority called conscience. Adam Smith and many other writers were especially struck by their sympathetic character. We are naturally attracted by humanity and repelled by cruelty, and this instinctive, unreasoning sentiment constitutes, according to these moralists, the difference between right and wrong. Cudworth, however, the English precursor of Kant, had already anticipated, and later metaphysicians have more fully exhibited, the inadequacy of such an analysis. Justice, humanity, veracity, and kindred virtues not merely have the power of attracting us; we have also an intellectual perception that they are essentially and immutably good, that their nature does not depend upon, and is not relative to, our constitutions; that it is impossible and inconceivable they should ever be vices, and their opposites virtues. They are, therefore, it is said, intuitions of the reason. Clarke, developing the same rational school, and following in the steps of those moralists who regard our nature as a hierarchy of powers or faculties, with different degrees of dignity and an appropriate order of supremacy and subordination, maintained that virtue consisted in harmony with the nature of things. Wollaston endeavoured to reduce it to truth, and Hutcheson to benevolence, which he maintained is recognised and approved by what his respect for the philosophy of Locke induced him to call "a moral sense," but what Shaftesbury had regarded as a moral "taste." The pleasure attending the gratification of this taste, according to Shaftesbury and Henry More, is the motive to virtue. (The doctrine of a moral sense or faculty was the basis of the ethics of Reid. Hume maintained that the peculiar quality of virtue is its utility, but that our affections are purely disinterested, and that we arrive at our knowledge, of what is vir-

tuous by a moral sense implanted in our nature, which leads us instinctively to approve of all acts that are beneficial to others. Expanding a pregnant hint which had been thrown out by Butler, he laid the foundation for a union of the schools of Clarke and Shaftesbury, by urging that our moral decisions are not simple, but complex, containing both a judgment of the reason and an emotion of the heart. This fact has been elucidated still further by later writers, who have observed that these two elements apply in varying degrees to different kinds of virtue. According to Lord Kames, our intellectual perception of right and wrong applies most strictly to virtues like justice or veracity, which are of what is called "perfect obligation," or, in other words, are of such a nature that their violation is a distinct crime, while the emotion of attraction or affection is shown most strongly towards virtues of imperfect obligation, like benevolence or charity. Like Hutcheson and Shaftesbury, Lord Kames notices the analogies between our moral and æsthetical judgments.

These last analogies open out a region of thought widely different from that we have been traversing. The close connection between the good and the beautiful has been always felt, so much so that both were in Greek expressed by the same word, and in the philosophy of Plato moral beauty was regarded as the archetype of which all visible beauty is only the shadow or the image. We all feel that there is a strict propriety in the term moral beauty. We feel that there are different forms of beauty which have a natural correspondence to different moral qualities, and much of the charm of poetry and eloquence rests upon this harmony. We feel that we have a direct, immediate, intuitive perception that some objects, such as the sky above us, are beautiful, that this perception of beauty is totally different, and could not possibly be derived, from a perception of their utility, and that it bears a very striking resemblance to the instantaneous and unreasoning admiration elicited by a generous or heroic action. We perceive, too, if we examine with care the operations of our own mind, that an æsthetical judgment includes an intuition or intellectual perception, and an emotion of attraction or admiration very similar to those which compose a moral judgment. The very idea of beauty, again, implies that it

should be admired, as the idea of happiness implies that it should be desired, and the idea of duty that it should be performed. There is also a striking correspondence between the degree and kind of uniformity we can in each case discover. That there is a difference between right and wrong, and between beauty and ugliness, are both propositions which are universally felt. That right is better than wrong, and beauty than ugliness, are equally unquestioned. When we go further, and attempt to define the nature of these qualities, we are met, indeed, by great diversities of detail, but by a far larger amount of substantial unity. Poems like the *Iliad* or the *Psalms*, springing in the most dissimilar quarters, have commanded the admiration of men through all the changes of some 3,000 years. The charm of music, the harmony of the female countenance, the majesty of the starry sky, of the ocean or of the mountain, the gentler beauties of the murmuring stream or of the twilight shades, were felt, as they are felt now, when the imagination of the infant world first embodied itself in written words. And in the same way types of heroism, and of virtue, descending from the remotest ages, command the admiration of mankind. We can sympathise with the emotions of praise or blame revealed in the earliest historians, and the most ancient moralists strike a responsive chord in every heart. The broad lines remain unchanged. No one ever contended that justice was a vice or injustice a virtue; or that a summer sunset was a repulsive object, or that the sores upon a human body were beautiful. Always, too, the objects of æsthetical admiration were divided into two great classes, the sublime and the beautiful, which in ethics have their manifest counterparts in the heroic and the amiable.

If, again, we examine the undoubted diversities that exist in judgments of virtue and of beauty, we soon discover that in each case a large proportion of them are to be ascribed to the different degrees of civilisation. The moral standard changes within certain limits, and according to a regular process, with the evolutions of society. There are virtues very highly estimated in a rude civilisation which sink into comparative insignificance in an organised society, while, conversely, virtues that were deemed secondary in the first become primary in

the other. There are even virtues that it is impossible for any but highly cultivated minds to recognise. Questions of virtue and vice, such as the difference between humanity and barbarity, or between temperance and intemperance, are sometimes merely questions of degree, and the standard at one stage of civilisation may be much higher than at another. Just in the same way a steady modification of tastes, while a recognition of the broad features of beauty remains unchanged, accompanies advancing civilisation. The preference of gaudy to subdued tints, of colour to form, of a florid to a chaste style, of convulsive attitudes, gigantic figures, and strong emotions, may be looked for with considerable confidence in an uninstructed people. The refining influence of cultivation is in no sphere more remarkable than in the canons of taste it produces, and there are few better measures of the civilisation of a people than the conceptions of beauty it forms, the type or ideal it endeavours to realise.

Many diversities, however, both of moral and æsthetical judgments, may be traced to accidental causes. Someone who is greatly admired, or who possesses great influence, is distinguished by some peculiarity of appearance, or introduces some peculiarity of dress. He will soon find countless imitators. Gradually the natural sense of beauty will become vitiated; the eye and the taste will adjust themselves to a false and artificial standard, and men will at last judge according to it with the most absolute spontaneity. In the same way, if any accidental circumstance has elevated an indifferent action to peculiar honour, if a religious system enforces it as a virtue or brands it as a vice, the consciences of men will after a time accommodate themselves to the sentence, and an appeal to a wider than a local tribunal is necessary to correct the error. Every nation, again, from its peculiar circumstances and position, tends to some particular type, both of beauty and of virtue, and it naturally extols its national type beyond all others. The virtues of a small poor nation, living among barren mountains, surrounded by powerful enemies, and maintaining its independence only by the most inflexible discipline, watchfulness, and courage, will be in some degree different from those of a rich people removed from all fear of invasion and placed in the centre of

commerce. The former will look with a very lenient eye on acts of barbarity or treachery, which to the latter would appear unspeakably horrible, and will value very highly certain virtues of discipline which the other will comparatively neglect. So, too, the conceptions of beauty formed by a nation of negroes will be different from those formed by a nation of whites;¹ the splendour of a tropical sky or the savage grandeur of a northern ocean, the aspect of great mountains or of wide plains, will not only supply nations with present images of sublimity or beauty, but will also contribute to form their standard and affect their judgments. Local customs or observances become so interwoven with our earliest recollections that we at last regard them as essentially venerable, and even in the most trivial matters it requires a certain effort to dissolve the association. There was much wisdom as well as much wit in the picture of the novelist who described the English footman's contempt for the uniforms of the French, "blue being altogether ridiculous for regimentals, except in the blue guards and artillery"; and I suppose there are few Englishmen into whose first confused impression of France there does not enter a half-instinctive feeling of repugnance caused by the ferocious appearance of a peasantry who are all dressed like butchers.²

It has been said³ that "the feelings of beauty, grandeur, and whatever else is comprehended under the name of taste, do not lead to action, but terminate in delightful contemplation, which constitutes the essential distinction between them and the moral sentiments, to which in some points of view they may doubtless be likened." This position I conceive to be altogether untenable. Our æsthetical judgment is of the nature of a preference. It leads us to prefer one class of objects to another, and, whenever other things are equal, becomes a ground for action. In choosing the persons with whom we live, the neighbourhood we inhabit, the objects that surround us, we prefer that which is

beautiful to that which is the reverse, and in every case in which a choice between beauty and deformity is in question, and no counteracting motive intervenes, we choose the former and avoid the latter. There are, no doubt, innumerable events in life in which this question does not arise, but there are also very many in which we are not called upon to make a moral judgment. We say a man is actuated by strong moral principle who chooses according to its dictates in every case involving a moral judgment that comes naturally before him, and who, in obedience to its impulse, pursues special courses of action. Corresponding propositions may be maintained with perfect truth concerning our sense of beauty. In proportion to its strength does it guide our course in ordinary life, and determine our peculiar pursuits. We may, indeed, sacrifice our sense of material beauty to considerations of utility with much more alacrity than our sense of moral beauty; we may consent to build a shapeless house sooner than to commit a dishonourable action, but we cannot voluntarily choose that which is simply deformed rather than that which is beautiful without a certain feeling of pain; and a pain of this kind, according to the school of Hartley, is the precise definition of conscience. Nor is it at all difficult to conceive men with a sense of beauty so strong that they would die rather than outrage it.

Considering all these things, it is not surprising that many moralists should have regarded moral excellence as simply the highest form of beauty, and moral cultivation as the supreme refinement of taste. But although this manner of regarding it is, as I think, far more plausible than the theory which resolves virtue into utility, although the Greek moralists and the school of Shaftesbury have abundantly proved that there is an extremely close connection between these orders of ideas, there are two considerations which appear to show the inadequacy of this theory. We are clearly conscious of the propriety of applying the epithet "beautiful" to virtues such as charity, reverence, or devotion, but we cannot apply it with the same propriety to duties of perfect obligation, such as veracity or integrity. The sense of beauty and the affection that follows it attach themselves rather to modes of enthusiasm and feeling than to the course of simple duty which constitutes

¹ M. Ch. Comte, in his very learned *Traité de Législation*, liv. iii. ch. iv., has made an extremely curious collection of instances in which different nations have made their own distinctive peculiarities of colour and form the ideal of beauty.

² "How particularly fine the hard theta is in our English terminations, as in that grand word death, for which the Germans gutturise a sound that puts you in mind of nothing but a loathsome toad." (Coleridge's *Table Talk*, p. 181.)

³ Mackintosh, *Dissert.* p. 238

a merely truthful and upright man.* Besides this, as the Stoics and Butler have shown, the position of conscience in our nature is wholly unique, and clearly separates morals from a study of the beautiful. While each of our senses or appetites has a restricted sphere of operation, it is the function of conscience to survey the whole constitution of our being, and assign limits to the gratification of all our various passions and desires. Differing not in degree, but in kind from the other principles of our nature, we feel that a course of conduct which is opposed to it may be intelligibly described as unnatural, even when in accordance with our most natural appetites, for to conscience is assigned the prerogative of both judging and restraining them all. Its power may be insignificant, but its title is undisputed, and "if it had might as it has right, it would govern the world."† It is this faculty, distinct from, and superior to, all appetites, passions, and tastes, that makes virtue the supreme law of life, and adds an imperative character to the feeling of attraction it inspires. It is this which was described by Cicero as the God ruling within us; by the Stoics as the sovereignty of reason; by St. Paul as the law of nature, by Butler as the supremacy of conscience.

The distinction of different parts of our nature, as higher or lower, which appears in the foregoing reasoning, and which occupies so important a place in the intuitive system of morals, is one that can only be defended by the way of illustrations. A writer can only select cases in which such distinctions seem most apparent, and leave them to the feelings of his reader. A few examples will, I hope, be sufficient to show that, even in our pleasures, we are not simply determined by the amount of enjoyment, but that there is a difference of kind which may be reasonably described by the epithets higher or lower.

If we suppose a being from another sphere, who derived his conceptions from a purely rational process, without the intervention of the senses, to descend to our world, and to enquire into the principles of human nature, I imagine there are few points that would strike him as more anomalous, or which he would be more

absolutely unable to realise, than the different estimates in which men hold the pleasures derived from the two senses of tasting and hearing. Under the first is comprised the enjoyment resulting from the action of certain kinds of food upon the palate; under the second, the charm of music. Each of these forms of pleasure is natural, each can be greatly heightened by cultivation, in each case the pleasure may be vivid but is very transient, and in neither case do evil consequences necessarily ensue. Yet, with so many undoubted points of resemblance, when we turn to the actual world we find the difference between these two orders of pleasure of such a nature that a comparison seems absolutely ludicrous. In what then does this difference consist? Not, surely, in the greater intensity of the enjoyment derived from music, for in many cases this superiority does not exist.‡ We are all conscious that, in our comparison of these pleasures, there is an element distinct from any consideration of their intensity, duration, or consequences. We naturally attach a faint notion of shame to the one, while we as naturally glory in the other. A very keen sense of the pleasures of the palate is looked upon as in a certain degree discreditable. A man will hardly boast that he is very fond of eating, but he has no hesitation in acknowledging that he is very fond of music. The first taste lowers, and the second elevates, him in his own eyes and in those of his neighbours.

Again, let a man of cheerful disposition and of a cultivated but not very fastidious taste observe his own emotions and the countenances of those around him during the representation of a clever tragedy and of a clever farce, and it is probable that he will come to the conclusion that his enjoyment in the latter case has been both more unmingled and more intense than in the former. He has felt no lassitude, he has not endured the amount of pain that necessarily accompanies the

* Speaking of the animated statue which he regarded as a representative of man, Condillac says "Le goût peut ordinairement contribuer plus que l'odorat à son bonheur et à son malheur. Il y contribue même encore plus que les sons harmonieux, parce que le besoin de nourriture lui rend les saveurs plus nécessaires, et par conséquent les lui fait goûter avec plus de vivacité. La faim pourra la rendre malheureuse, mais dès qu'elle aura remarqué les sensations propres à l'apaiser, elle y déterminera davantage son attention, les désirera avec plus de violence et en jouira avec plus de délice." (*Traité des Sensations*, première partie ch. x.)

* Lord Kames's *Essays on Morality* (1st edition), pp. 55-56.

† See Butler's *Three Sermons on Human Nature*, and the preface.

pleasure of pathos, he has experienced a vivid, absorbing pleasure, and he has traced similar emotions in the violent demonstrations of his neighbours. Yet he will readily admit that the pleasure derived from the tragedy is of a higher order than that derived from the farce. Sometimes he will find himself hesitating which of the two he will choose. The love of mere enjoyment leads him to the one. A sense of its *nobler* character inclines him to the other.

A similar distinction may be observed in other departments. Except in the relation of the sexes, it is probable that a more intense pleasure is usually obtained from the grotesque and the eccentric than from the perfections of beauty. The pleasure derived from beauty is not violent in its nature, and it is in most cases peculiarly mixed with melancholy. The feelings of a man who is deeply moved by a lovely landscape are rarely those of extreme elation. A shade of melancholy steals over his mind. His eyes fill with tears. A vague and unsatisfied longing fills his soul. Yet, troubled and broken as is this form of enjoyment, few persons would hesitate to pronounce it of a higher kind than any that can be derived from the exhibitions of oddity.

If pleasures were the sole objects of our pursuit, and if their excellence were measured only by the quantity of enjoyment they afford, nothing could appear more obvious than that the man would be esteemed most wise who attained his object at least cost. Yet the whole course of civilisation is in a precisely opposite direction. A child derives the keenest and most exquisite enjoyment from the simplest objects. A flower, a doll, a rude game, the least artistic tale, is sufficient to enchant it. An uneducated peasant is enraptured with the wildest story and the coarsest wit. Increased cultivation almost always produces a fastidiousness which renders necessary the increased elaboration of our pleasures. We attach a certain discredit to a man who has retained those of childhood. The very fact of our deriving pleasure from certain amusements creates a kind of humiliation, for we feel that they are not in harmony with the nobility of our nature.¹

¹ This is one of the favourite thoughts of Pascal, who, however, in his usual fashion dwells upon it in a somewhat morbid and exaggerated strain. "C'est une bien grande misère que de pouvoir prendre plaisir

Our judgments of societies resemble in this respect our judgments of individuals. Few persons, I think, who have compared the modes of popular life in stagnant and undeveloped countries like Spain with those in the great centres of industrial civilisation will venture to pronounce with any confidence that the quantum or average of actual realised enjoyment is greater in the civilised than in the semi-civilised society. An undeveloped nature is by no means necessarily an unhappy nature; and, although we possess no accurate gauge of happiness, we may, at least, be certain that its degrees do not coincide with the degrees of prosperity. The tastes and habits of men in a backward society accommodate themselves to the narrow circle of a few pleasures, and probably find in these as complete satisfaction as more civilised men in a wider range; and if there is in the first condition somewhat more of the weariness of monotony, there is in the second much more of the anxiety of discontent. The superiority of a highly civilised man lies chiefly in the fact that he belongs to a higher order of being, for he has approached more nearly to the end of his existence, and has called into action a larger number of his capacities. And this is in itself an end. Even if, as is not improbable, the lower animals are happier than man,² and semi-barbarians than civilised men, still it is better to be a man than a brute, better to be born amid the fierce struggles of civilisation than in some stranded nation apart from all the flow of enterprise and knowledge. Even in that material civilisation which utilitarianism delights to glorify, there is an element which the philosophy of mere enjoyment cannot explain.

Again, if we ask the reason of the vast and indisputable superiority which the general voice of mankind gives to mental pleasures, considered as pleasures, over

à des choses si basses et si méprisables... L'homme est encore plus à plaindre de ce qu'il peut se divertir à ces choses si frivoles et si basses, que de ce qu'il s'afflige de ses misères effectives... D'où vient que cet homme, qui a perdu depuis peu son fils unique, et qui, accablé de procès et de querelles, était ce matin si troublé, n'y pense plus maintenant? Ne vous en étonnez pas; il est tout occupé à voir par où passera un cerf que ses chiens poursuivent... C'est une joie de malade et de trépassé." (*Pensées*, Misère de l'homme)

² "Quæ singula improvidam mortalitatem involvunt, solum ut inter ista certum sit, nihil esse certi, nec miserius quidquam homine aut superbius. Cæteris quippe ammantium sola victus cura est, in quo sponte naturæ benignitas sufficit: uno quidem vel præferenda cunctis bonis, quod de gloria, de pecunia, ambitione superque de morte, non cogitant." (*Plin. Hist. Nat.* lib. 5.)

physical ones, we shall find, I think, no adequate or satisfactory answer on the supposition that pleasures owe all their value to the quantity of enjoyment they afford. The former, it is truly said, are more varied and more prolonged than the latter; but, on the other hand, they are attained with more effort, and they are diffused over a far narrower circle. No one who compares the class of men who derive their pleasure chiefly from field sports or other forms of physical enjoyment with those who derive their pleasure from the highest intellectual sources; no one who compares the period of boyhood, when enjoyments are chiefly animal, with early manhood, when they are chiefly intellectual, will be able to discover in the different levels of happiness any justification of the great interval the world places between these pleasures. No painter or novelist who wished to depict an ideal of perfect happiness would seek it in a profound student. Without entering into any doubtful questions concerning the relations of the body to all mental states, it may be maintained that bodily conditions have in general more influence upon our enjoyment than mental ones. The happiness of the great majority of men is far more affected by health and by temperament,¹ resulting from physical conditions, which, again, physical enjoyments are often calculated to produce, than by any mental or moral causes; and acute physical sufferings paralyse all the energies of our nature to a greater extent than any mental distress. It is probable that the American inventor of the first anæsthetic has done more for the real happiness of mankind than all the moral

philosophers from Socrates to Mill. Moral causes may teach men patience, and the endurance of felt suffering, or may even alleviate its pangs; but there are temperaments due to physical causes from which most sufferings glance almost unfelt. It is said that when an ancient was asked, "What use is philosophy?" he answered, "It teaches men how to die," and he verified his words by a noble death; but it has been proved on a thousand battle-fields, it has been proved on a thousand scaffolds, it is proved through all the wide regions of China and India, that the dull and animal nature which feels little and realises faintly, can meet death with a calm that philosophy can barely rival.² The truth is that the mental part of our nature is not regarded as superior to the physical part because it contributes most to our happiness. The superiority is of a different kind, and may be intelligibly expressed by the epithets higher and lower.

And, once more, there is a class of pleasures resulting from the gratification of our moral feelings which we naturally place in the foremost rank. To the great majority of mankind it will probably appear, in spite of the doctrine of Paley, that no multiple of the pleasure of eating pastry can be an equivalent to the pleasure derived from a generous action. It is not that the latter is so inconceivably intense. It is that it is of a higher order.

This distinction of kind has been neglected or denied by most utilitarian writers;³ and although an attempt has

¹ Paley, in his very ingenious, and in some respects admirable, chapter on happiness tries to prove the inferiority of animal pleasures by showing the short time their enjoyment actually lasts, the extent to which they are dulled by repetition, and the cases in which they incapacitate man for other pleasures. But this calculation omits the influence of some animal enjoyments upon health and temperament. The fact, however, that health, which is a condition of body, is the chief source of happiness, Paley fully admits. "Health," he says, "is the one thing needful. . . . When we are in perfect health and spirits we feel in ourselves a happiness independent of any particular outward gratification. This is an enjoyment which the Deity has annexed to life, and probably constitutes in a great measure the happiness of infants and brutes. of oysters, periwinkles, and the like; for which I have sometimes been at a loss to find out amusement." On the test of happiness he very fairly says: "All that can be said is that there remains a presumption in favour of those conditions of life in which men generally appear most cheerful and contented; for though the apparent happiness of mankind be not always a true measure of their real happiness, it is the best measure we have." (*Moral Philosophy*, i. 6.)

² A writer who devoted a great part of his life to studying the deaths of men in different countries, classes, and churches, and to collecting from other physicians information on the subject, says: "A mesure qu'on s'éloigne des grands foyers de civilisation, qu'on se rapproche des plaines et des montagnes, le caractère de la mort prend de plus en plus l'aspect calme du ciel par un beau crépuscule du soir. En général la mort s'accomplit d'une manière d'autant plus simple et naturelle qu'on est plus libre des innombrables liens de la civilisation." (Lauvergne, *De l'Agonie de la Mort*, tome i. pp. 131-132.)

³ "I will omit much usual declamation upon the dignity and capacity of our nature, the superiority of the soul to the body, of the rational to the animal part of our constitution, upon the worthiness, refinement, and delicacy of some satisfactions, or the meanness, grossness, and sensuality of others; because I hold that pleasures differ in nothing but in continuance and intensity." (Paley's *Moral Philosophy*, book i. ch. vi.) Bentham in like manner said: "Quantity of pleasure being equal, pushpin is as good as poetry, and he maintained that the value of a pleasure depends on—its (1) intensity, (2) duration, (3) certainty, (4) propinquity, (5) purity, (6) fecundity, (7) extent. (*Springs of Action*) The recognition of the 'purity' of a pleasure might seem to imply the distinction for which I have contended in the text, but this is not so. The purity of a pleasure or pain, according to Bentham is 'the

recently been made to introduce it into the system, it appears manifestly incompatible with its principle. If the reality of the distinction be admitted, it shows that our wills are so far from tending necessarily to that which produces most enjoyment that we have the power, even in our pleasures, of recognising a higher and a wholly different quality, and of making that quality rather than enjoyment the object of our choice. If it be possible for a man in choosing between two pleasures deliberately to select as preferable, apart from all consideration of consequences, that which he is conscious gives least enjoyment because he recognises in it a greater worthiness, or elevation, it is certain that his conduct is either wholly irrational, or that he is acting on a principle of judgment for which "the greatest happiness" philosophy is unable to account. Consistently with that philosophy, the terms higher and lower as applied to different parts of our nature, to different regions of thought or feeling, can have no other meaning than that of productive of more or less enjoyment. But if once we admit a distinction of quality as well as a distinction of quantity in our estimate of pleasure, all is changed. It then appears evident that the different parts of our nature to which these pleasures refer, bear to each other a relation of another kind, which may be clearly and justly described by the terms higher and lower; and the assertion that

chance it has of not being followed by sensations of the opposite kind: that is pain if it be a pleasure, pleasure if it be a pain" (*Morals and Legislation*, i. § 8) Mr. Buckle (*Hist. of Civilisation*, vol. II pp. 399-400) writes in a somewhat similar strain, but less unequivocally, for he admits that mental pleasures are "more ennobling" than physical ones. The older utilitarians, as far as I have observed, did not even advert to the question. This being the case, it must have been a matter of surprise as well as of gratification to most intuitive moralists to find Mr. Mill fully recognising the existence of different kinds of pleasure, and admitting that the superiority of the higher kinds does not spring from their being greater in amount. (*Utilitarianism*, pp. 11-12.) If it be meant by this that we have the power of recognising some pleasures as superior to others in kind, irrespective of all consideration of their intensity, their cost, and their consequences, I submit that the admission is completely incompatible with the utilitarian theory, and that Mr. Mill has only succeeded in introducing Stoical elements into his system by loosening its very foundation. The impossibility of establishing an aristocracy of enjoyments in which, apart from all considerations of consequences, some give less pleasure and are less widely diffused are regarded as intrinsically superior to others which give more pleasure and are more general, without admitting into our estimate a moral element which on utilitarian principles is wholly illegitimate, has been powerfully shown since the first edition of this book by Professor Grote in his *Examination of the Utilitarian Philosophy*, chap. III.

our reason reveals to us intuitively and directly this hierarchy of our being, is a fundamental position of the greatest schools of intuitive moralists. According to these writers, when we say that our moral and intellectual is superior to our animal nature, that the benevolent affections are superior to the selfish ones, that conscience has a legitimate supremacy over the other parts of our being; this language is not arbitrary, or fantastic, or capricious, because it is intelligible. When such a subordination is announced it corresponds with feelings we all possess, falls in with the natural course of our judgments with our habitual and un-studied language.

The arguments that have been directed against the theory of natural moral perceptions are of two kinds, the first, which I have already noticed, being designed to show that all our moral judgments may be resolved into considerations of utility; the second resting upon the diversity of these judgments in different nations and stages of civilisation, which, it is said, is altogether inexplicable upon the supposition of a moral faculty. As these variations form the great stumbling-block in the way of the doctrine I am maintaining, and as they constitute a very important part of the history of morals, I shall make no apology for noticing them in some detail.

In the first place, there are many cases in which diversities of moral judgment arise from causes that are not moral, but purely intellectual. Thus, for example, when theologians pronounced loans at interest contrary to the law of nature and plainly extortionate, this error obviously arose from the false notion of the uses of money. They believed that it was a sterile thing, and that he who has restored what he borrowed has cancelled all the benefit he received from the transaction. At the time when the first Christian moralists treated the subject, special circumstances had rendered the rate of interest extremely high, and consequently extremely oppressive to the poor, and this fact, no doubt, strengthened the prejudice; but the root of the condemnation of usury was simply an error in political economy. When men came to understand that money is a productive thing, and that the sum lent enables the borrower to create sources of wealth that will continue when the loan has been returned, they perceived that there was no natural injustice in

exacting payment for this advantage, and usury either ceased to be assailed, or was assailed only upon the ground of positive commands.

Thus, again, the question of the criminality of abortion has been considerably affected by physiological speculations as to the time when the foetus in the womb acquires the nature, and therefore the rights, of a separate being. The general opinion among the ancients seems to have been that it was but a part of the mother, and that she had the same right to destroy it as to cauterise a tumour upon her body. Plato and Aristotle both admitted the practice. The Roman law contained no enactment against voluntary abortion till the time of Ulpian. The Stoics thought that the infant received its soul when respiration began. The Justinian code fixed its animation at forty days after conception. In modern legislations it is treated as a distinct being from the moment of conception.* It is obvious that the solution of such questions, though affecting our moral judgments, must be sought entirely outside the range of moral feelings.

In the next place, there is a broad distinction to be drawn between duties which rest immediately on the dictates of conscience and those which are based upon positive commands. The iniquity of theft, murder, falsehood, or adultery rests upon grounds generically distinct from those on which men pronounce it to be sinful to eat meat on Friday, or to work on Sunday, or to abstain from religious assemblies. The reproaches conscience directs against those who are guilty of these last acts are purely hypothetical, conscience enjoining obedience to the Divine commands, but leaving it to reason to determine what those commands may be. The distinction between these two classes of duties becomes apparent on the slightest reflection, and the variations in their relative prominence form one of the most important branches of religious history.

Closely connected with the preceding are the diversities which result from an ancient custom becoming at last, through its very antiquity, or through the confusion of means with ends, an object of religious reverence. Among the many

safeguards of female purity in the Roman republic was an enactment forbidding women even to taste wine, and this very intelligent law, being enforced with the earliest education, became at last, by habit and traditional reverence, so incorporated with the moral feelings of the people that its violation was spoken of as a monstrous crime. Aulus Gellius has preserved a passage in which Cato observes, "that the husband has an absolute authority over his wife; it is for him to condemn and punish her if she has been guilty of any shameful act, such as drinking wine or committing adultery."† As soon as the reverence for tradition was diminished, and men ventured to judge old customs upon their own merits, they were able, by steadily reflecting upon this belief, to reduce it to its primitive elements, to separate the act from the ideas with which it had been associated, and thus to perceive that it was not necessarily opposed to any of those great moral laws or feelings which their consciences revealed, and which were the basis of all their reasonings on morals.

A confused association of ideas, which is easily exposed by a patient analysis, lies at the root of more serious anomalies. Thus, to those who reflect deeply upon moral history, few things, I suppose, are more humiliating than to contrast the admiration and profoundly reverential attachment excited by a conqueror, who, through the promptings of simple vanity, through love of fame, or through greed of territory, has wantonly caused the deaths, the sufferings, or the bereave-

* Aulus Gellius, *Noctes*, x. 23. The law is given by Dion Halicarn. Valerius Maximus says, "Vini usus olim Romanis teminis ignotus fuit, ne scilicet in aliquod dedecus prolaberentur: quia proximus a Libero patre intemperantiæ gradus ad inconcessam Venerem esse consuevit" (Val. Max. ii. 1. § 5). This is also noticed by Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* xiv. 14), who ascribes the law to Romulus, and who mentions two cases in which women were said to have been put to death for this offence, and a third in which the offender was deprived of her dowry. Cato said that the ancient Romans were accustomed to kiss their wives for the purpose of discovering whether they had been drinking wine. The Bona Dea, it is said, was originally a woman named Fatua, who was famous for her modesty and fidelity to her husband, but who, unfortunately, having once found a cask of wine in the house, got drunk, and was in consequence scourged to death by her husband. He afterwards repented of his act, and paid divine honours to her memory, and as a memorial of her death a cask of wine was always placed upon the altar during the rites. (Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* i. 22.) The Milesians, also, and the inhabitants of Marseilles are said to have had laws forbidding women to drink wine (Elian, *Hist. Var.* ii. 38). Tertullian describes the prohibition of wine among the Roman women as in his time obsolete, and a taste for it was one of the great trials of St. Monica (*Aug. Conf.* x. 8).

* Büchner, *Force et Matière*, pp. 163-164. There is a very curious collection of the speculations of the ancient philosophers on this subject in Plutarch's treatise, *De Placitis Philos.*

ments of thousands, with the abhorrence produced by a single act of murder or robbery committed by a poor and ignorant man, perhaps under the pressure of extreme want or intolerable wrong. The attraction of genius and power, which the vulgar usually measure by their material fruits, the advantages acquired by the nation to which he belongs, the belief that battles are decided by providential interference, and that military success is therefore a proof of Divine favour, and the sanctity ascribed to the regal office, have all no doubt conspired to veil the atrocity of the conqueror's career; but there is probably another and a deeper influence behind. That which invests war, in spite of all the evils that attend it, with a certain moral grandeur is the heroic self-sacrifice it elicits. With perhaps the single exception of the Church, it is the sphere in which mercenary motives have least sway, in which performance is least weighed and measured by strict obligation, in which a disinterested enthusiasm has most scope. A battle-field is the scene of deeds of self-sacrifice so transcendent, and at the same time so dramatic, that, in spite of all its horrors and crimes, it awakens the most passionate moral enthusiasm. But this feeling, produced by the thought of so many who have sacrificed their life-blood for their flag or for their chief, needs some definite object on which to rest. The multitude of nameless combatants do not strike the imagination. They do not stand out, and are not realised, as distinct and living figures conspicuous to the view. Hence it is that the chief, as the most prominent, becomes the representative warrior; the martyr's aureole descends upon his brow, and thus, by a confusion that seems the very irony of fate, the enthusiasm evoked by the self-sacrifice of thousands sheds a sacred glow around the very man whose prodigious egotism had rendered that sacrifice necessary.

Another form of moral paradox is derived from the fact that positive religions may override our moral perceptions in such a manner that we may consciously admit a moral contradiction. In this respect there is a strict parallelism between our intellectual and our moral faculties. It is at present the professed belief of at least three-fourths of the Christian Church, and was for some centuries the firm belief of the entire Church,

that on a certain night the Founder of the Christian faith, being seated at a supper table, held His own body in His own hand, broke that body, distributed it to His disciples, who proceeded to eat it, the same body remaining at the same moment seated intact at the table, and soon afterwards proceeding to the garden of Gethsemane. The fact of such a doctrine being believed does not imply that the faculties of those who hold it are of such a nature that they perceive no contradiction or natural absurdity in these statements. The well-known argument derived from the obscurity of the metaphysical notion of substance is intended only in some slight degree to soften the difficulty. The contradiction is clearly perceived, but it is accepted by faith as part of the teaching of the Church.

What transubstantiation is in the order of reason the Augustinian doctrine of the damnation of unbaptised infants, and the Calvinistic doctrine of reprobation, are in the order of morals. Of these doctrines it is not too much to say that, in the form in which they have often been stated, they surpass in atrocity any tenets that have ever been admitted into any pagan creed, and would, if they formed an essential part of Christianity, amply justify the term "pernicious superstition," which Tacitus applied to the faith. That a little child who lives but a few minutes after birth and dies before it has been sprinkled with the sacred water is in such a sense responsible for its ancestors having 6,000 years before eaten some forbidden fruit that it may with perfect justice be resuscitated and cast into an abyss of eternal fire in expiation of this ancestral crime, that an all-righteous and all-merciful Creator, in the full exercise of those attributes, deliberately calls into existence sentient beings whom He has from eternity irrevocably destined to endless, unspeakable, unmitigated torture, are propositions which are at once so extravagantly absurd and so ineffably atrocious that their adoption might well lead men to doubt the universality of moral perceptions. Such teaching is, in fact, simply demonism, and demonism in its most extreme form. It attributes to the Creator acts of injustice and of barbarity which it would be absolutely impossible for the imagination to surpass, acts before which the most monstrous excesses of human cruelty dwindle into insignificance; acts which are, in fact, consider-

ably worse than any that theologians have attributed to the devil. If there were men who, while vividly realising the nature of these acts, naturally turned to them as the exhibitions of perfect goodness, all systems of ethics founded upon innate moral perceptions would be false. But happily this is not so. Those who embrace these doctrines do so only because they believe that some inspired Church or writer has taught them, and because they are still in that stage in which men consider it more irreligious to question the infallibility of an apostle than to disfigure by any conceivable imputation the character of the Deity. They accordingly esteem it a matter of duty, and a commendable exercise of humility, to stifle the moral feelings of their nature, and they at last succeed in persuading themselves that their Divinity would be extremely offended if they hesitated to ascribe to Him the attributes of a fiend. But their moral feelings, though not unimpaired by such conceptions, are not on ordinary subjects generically different from those of their neighbours. With an amiable inconsistency they can even find something to revolt them in the lives of a Caligula or a Nero. Their theological estimate of justice and mercy is isolated. Their doctrine is accepted as a kind of moral miracle, and, as is customary with a certain school of theologians, when they enunciate a proposition which is palpably self-contradictory they call it a mystery and an occasion for faith.

In this instance a distinct moral contradiction is consciously admitted. In the case of persecution, a strictly moral and logical inference is drawn from a very immoral proposition which is accepted as part of a system of dogmatic theology. The two elements that should be considered in punishing a criminal are the heinousness of his guilt and the injury he inflicts. When the greatest guilt and the greatest injury are combined, the greatest punishment naturally follows. No one would argue against the existence of a moral faculty on the ground that men put murderers to death. When, therefore, theologians believed that a man was intensely guilty who held certain opinions, and that he was causing the damnation of his fellows if he propagated them, there was no moral difficulty in concluding that the heretic should be put to death. Selfish considerations may have directed persecution against heresy rather than

against vice, but the Catholic doctrines of the guilt of error and of the infallibility of the Church were amply sufficient to justify it.

It appears, then, that a dogmatic system which is accepted on rational or other grounds, and supported by prospects of rewards and punishments, may teach a code of ethics differing from that of conscience; and that in this case the voice of conscience may be either disregarded or stifled. It is, however, also true that it may be perverted. When, for example, theologians during a long period have inculcated habits of credulity rather than habits of enquiry; when they have persuaded men that it is better to cherish prejudice than to analyse it, better to stifle every doubt of what they have been taught than honestly to investigate its value, they will at last succeed in forming habits of mind that will instinctively and habitually recoil from all impartiality and intellectual honesty. If men continually violate a duty, they may at last cease to feel its obligation. But this, though it forms a great difficulty in ethical enquiries, is no argument against the reality of moral perceptions, for it is simply a law to which all our powers are subject. A bad intellectual education will produce not only erroneous or imperfect information, but also a false ply or habit of judgment. A bad æsthetical education will produce false canons of taste. Systematic abuse will pervert and vitiate even some of our physical perceptions. In each case the experience of many minds under many conditions must be appealed to to determine the standard of right and wrong, and long and difficult discipline is required to restore the diseased organ to sanity. We may decide particular moral questions by reasoning, but our reasoning is an appeal to certain moral principles which are revealed to us by intuition.

The principal difficulty, I imagine, which most men have in admitting that we possess certain natural moral perceptions arises from the supposition that it implies the existence of some mysterious agent like the *dæmon* of Socrates, which gives us specific and infallible information in particular cases. But this I conceive to be a complete mistake. All that is necessarily meant by the adherents of this school is comprised in two propositions. The first is that our will is not governed exclusively by the law of plea-

sure and pain, but also by the law of duty, which we feel to be distinct from the former, and to carry with it the sense of obligation. The second is that the basis of our conception of duty is an intuitive perception that among the various feelings, tendencies, and impulses that constitute our emotional being there are some which are essentially good and ought to be encouraged, and some that are essentially bad and ought to be repressed. They contend that it is a psychological fact that we are intuitively conscious that our benevolent affections are superior to our malevolent ones, truth to falsehood, justice to injustice, gratitude to ingratitude, chastity to sensuality, and that in all ages and countries the path of virtue has been towards the higher and not towards the lower feelings. It may be that the sense of duty is so weak as to be scarcely perceptible, and then the lower part of our nature will be supreme. It may happen that certain conditions of society lead men to direct their anxiety for moral improvement altogether in one or two channels, as was the case in ancient Greece, where civic and intellectual virtues were very highly cultivated, and the virtue of chastity was almost neglected. It may happen that different parts of our higher nature in a measure conflict, as when a very strong sense of justice checks our benevolent feelings. Dogmatic systems may enjoin men to propitiate certain unseen beings by acts which are not in accordance with the moral law. Special circumstances may influence, and the intermingling of many different motives may obscure and complicate, the moral evolution; but above all these one great truth appears. No one who desires to become holier and better imagines that he does so by becoming more malevolent, or more untruthful, or more unchaste. Everyone who desires to attain perfection in these departments of feeling is impelled towards benevolence, towards veracity, towards chastity.*

Now it is manifest that according to this theory the moral unity to be expected in different ages is not a unity of standard, or of acts, but a unity of tendency. Men come into the world with their benevolent affections very inferior in power to

their selfish ones, and the function of morals is to invert this order. The extinction of all selfish feeling is impossible for an individual, and, if it were general, it would result in the dissolution of society. The question of morals must always be a question of proportion or of degree. At one time the benevolent affections embrace merely the family; soon the circle, expanding, includes first a class, then a nation, then a coalition of nations, then all humanity, and finally its influence is felt in the dealings of man with the animal world. In each of these stages a standard is formed, different from that of the preceding stage, but in each case the same tendency is recognised as virtue.

We have in this fact a simple, and it appears to me a conclusive, answer to the overwhelming majority of the objections that are continually and confidently urged against the intuitive school. That some savages kill their old parents, that infanticide has been practised without compunction by even civilised nations, that the best Romans saw nothing wrong in the gladiatorial shows, that political or revengeful assassinations have been for centuries admitted, that slavery has been sometimes honoured and sometimes condemned, are unquestionable proofs that the same act may be regarded in one age as innocent, and in another as criminal. Now, it is undoubtedly true that in many cases an historical examination will reveal special circumstances explaining or palliating the apparent anomaly. It has been often shown that the gladiatorial shows were originally a form of human sacrifice adopted through religious motives; that the rude nomadic lives of savages rendering impossible the preservation of aged and helpless members of the tribe, the murder of parents was regarded as an act of mercy both by the murderer and the victim; that before an effective administration of justice was organised, private vengeance was the sole preservative against crime;† and political assassination against usurpation; that the insensibility of some savages to the criminality of theft arises from the fact that they were accustomed to have all things in common; that the Spartan law legal-

* "La loi fondamentale de la morale agit sur toutes les nations bien connues. Il y a mille différences dans les interprétations de cette loi en mille circonstances; mais le fond subsiste toujours le même, et ce fond est l'idée du juste et de l'injuste." (Voltaire, *Le Philosophe ignorant*.)

† The feeling in its favour being often intensified by filial affection. "What is the most beautiful thing on the earth?" said Osiris to Horus. "To avenge a parent's wrongs," was the reply. (Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*.)

ising theft arose partly from a desire to foster military dexterity among the people, but chiefly from a desire to discourage wealth; that slavery was introduced through motives of mercy, to prevent conquerors from killing their prisoners.² All this is true, but there is another and a more general answer. It is not to be expected, and it is not maintained, that men in all ages should have agreed about the application of their moral principles. All that is contended for is that these principles are themselves the same. Some of what appear to us monstrous acts of cruelty were dictated by that very feeling of humanity the universal perception of the merit of which they are cited to disprove,³ and even when this is not the case all that can be inferred is that the standard of humanity was very low. But still humanity was recognised as a virtue, and cruelty as a vice.

At this point I may observe how completely fallacious is the assertion that a progressive morality is impossible upon the supposition of an original moral faculty.³ To such statements there are two very simple answers. In the first place, although the intuitive moralist asserts that certain qualities are necessarily virtuous, he fully admits that the degree in which they are acted upon, or in other words the standard of duty, may become progressively higher. In the next

place, although he refuses to resolve all virtue into utility, he admits as fully as his opponents that benevolence, or the promotion of the happiness of man, is a virtue, and that, therefore, discoveries which exhibit more clearly the true interests of our kind may throw new light upon the nature of our duty.

The considerations I have urged with reference to humanity apply with equal force to the various relations of the sexes. When the passions of men are altogether unrestrained, community of wives and all eccentric forms of sensuality will be admitted. When men seek to improve their nature in this respect, their object will be to abridge and confine the empire of sensuality. But to this process of improvement there are obvious limits. In the first place, the continuance of the species is only possible by a sensual act.⁴ In the next place, the strength of this passion and the weakness of humanity are so great that the moralist must take into account the fact that in all societies, and especially in those in which free scope had long been given to the passions, a large amount of indulgence will arise which is not due to a simple desire of propagating the species. If then incest is prohibited, and community of wives replaced by ordinary polygamy, a moral improvement will have been effected and a standard of virtue formed. But this standard soon becomes the starting-point of new progress. If we examine the Jewish law, we find the legislator prohibiting adultery, regulating the degrees of marriage, but at the same time authorising polygamy, though with a caution against the excessive multiplication of wives. In Greece monogamy, though not without exceptions, had been enforced, but a concurrence of unfavourable influences prevented any high standard being attained among the men, and in their case almost every form of indulgence beyond the limits of marriage was permitted. In Rome the standard was far higher. Monogamy was firmly established. The ideal of female morality was placed as high as among Christian nations. Among men, however, while unnatural love and adultery were regarded as wrong, simple unchastity before marriage was scarcely considered a fault. In Catholicism marriage is regarded in a twofold light—as a means for the propagation of the species and as a concession to the weakness of humanity—and all

² Hence the Justinian code and also St Augustine (*De Civ. Dei*, xix. 15) derived *servus* from "*servare*," to preserve, because the victor preserved his prisoners alive.

³ "Les habitants du Congo tuent les malades qu'ils imaginent ne pouvoir en revenir; c'est, disent-ils, pour leur épargner les douleurs de l'agonie. Dans l'île Formose, lorsqu'un homme est dangereusement malade, on lui passe un nœud coulant au col et on l'étrangle, pour l'arracher à la douleur." (Hévétiüs, *De l'Esprit*, ii. 13.) A similar explanation may be often found for customs which are quoted to prove that the nations where they existed had no sense of chastity. "C'est pareillement sous la sauvegarde des lois que les Siamois, la gorge et les cuisses à moitié découvertes, portées dans les rues sur les palanquins, s'y présentent dans des attitudes très lascives. Cette loi fut établie par une de leurs reines nommée Tirada, qui, pour dégouter les hommes d'un amour plus déshonnête, crut devoir employer toute la puissance de la beauté." (*De l'Esprit*, ii. 14.)

⁴ "The contest between the morality which appeals to an external standard, and that which grounds itself on internal conviction, is the contest of progressive morality against stationary, of reason and argument against the deification of mere opinion and habit." (Mill's *Dissertations*, vol. ii. p. 471; a passage with a true Bentham ring.) See, too, vol. i. p. 158. There is, however, a schism on this point in the utilitarian camp. The views which Mr. Buckle has expressed in his most eloquent chapter on the comparative influence of intellectual and moral agencies in civilisation diverge widely from those of Mr. Mill.

other sensual enjoyment is stringently prohibited.

In these cases there is a great difference between the degrees of earnestness with which men exert themselves in the repression of their passions and in the amount of indulgence which is conceded to their lower nature;¹ but there is no difference in the direction of the virtuous impulse. While, too, in the case of adultery and in the production of children, questions of interest and utility do undoubtedly intervene, we are conscious that the general progress turns upon a totally different order of ideas. The feeling of all men and the language of all nations, the sentiment which though often weakened is never wholly effaced, that this appetite, even in its most legitimate gratification, is a thing to be veiled and withdrawn from sight, all that is known under the names of decency and indecency, concur in proving that we have an innate, intuitive, instinctive perception that there is something degrading in the sensual part of our nature, something to which a feeling of shame is naturally attached, something that jars with our conception of perfect purity, something we could not with any propriety ascribe to an all-holy being. It may be questioned whether anyone was ever altogether destitute of this perception, and nothing but the most inveterate passion for system could induce men to resolve it into a mere calculation of interests. It is this feeling or instinct which lies at the root of the whole movement I have described, and it is this too that produced that sense of the sanctity of perfect continence which the Catholic Church has so warmly encouraged, but which may be traced through the most distant ages and the most various creeds. We find it among the Nazarenes and Essenes of Judæa, among the priests of Egypt and India, in the monasteries of Tartary, in the histories of miraculous virgins that are so numerous in the mythologies of Asia. Such, for example, was the Chinese legend that tells how, when there was but one man with one woman upon earth, the woman refused to sacrifice her virginity even in order to people the globe, and the gods, honouring her purity, granted that she should conceive beneath the gaze of her lover's eyes, and a virgin-mother became the parent of

humanity.² In the midst of the sensuality of ancient Greece chastity was the pre-eminent attribute of sanctity ascribed to Athene and Artemis. "Chaste daughter of Zeus," prayed the suppliants in Æschylus, "thou whose calm eye is never troubled, look down upon us! Virgin, defend the virgins." The Parthenon, or virgin's temple, was the noblest religious edifice of Athens. Celibacy was an essential condition in a few of the orders of priests and in several orders of priestesses. Plato based his moral system upon the distinction between the bodily or sensual and the spiritual or rational part of our nature, the first being the sign of our degradation and the second of our dignity. The whole school of Pythagoras made chastity one of its leading virtues, and even laboured for the creation of a monastic system. The conception of the celestial Aphrodite, the uniter of souls unsullied by the taint of matter, lingered side by side with that of the earthly Aphrodite or patroness of lust; and if there was a time when the sculptors sought to pander to the excesses of passion, there was another in which all their art was displayed in refining and idealising it. Strabo mentions the existence in Thrace of societies of men aspiring to perfection by celibacy and austere lives. Plutarch applauds certain philosophers who vowed to abstain for a year from wine and women in order "to honour God by their continence."³ In Rome the religious reverence was concentrated more especially upon married life. The great prominence accorded to the Penates was the religious sanction of domesticity. So, too, at first was the worship, so popular among the Roman women, of the Bona Dea—the ideal wife who, according to the legend, had, when on earth, never looked in the face or known the name of any man but her husband.⁴ "For altar and hearth" was the rallying cry of the Roman soldier. But above all this we find the traces of a higher ideal. We find it in the intense sanctity attributed to the vestal virgins, whose continence was guarded by such fearful penalties, and

¹ Helvétius, *De l'Esprit*, discours iv. See, too, Dr. Draper's extremely remarkable *History of Intellectual Development in Europe* (New York, 1864), pp. 48, 53.

² Plutarch, *De Cohibenda Ira*.

³ Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* l. 22. The mysteries of the Bona Dea became, however, after a time, the occasion of great disorders. See Juvenal, *Sat.* vi. M. Magnin has examined the nature of these rites (*Origines du Théâtre*, pp. 257–259).

⁴ "Est enim sensualitas quedam vis animæ inferior. Ratio vero vis animæ est superior." (Peter Lombard, *Sent.* ii. 24).

supposed to be so closely linked with the prosperity of the State, whose prayer was believed to possess a miraculous power, and who were permitted to drive through the streets of Rome at a time when that privilege was refused even to the Empress.¹ We find it in the legend of Claudia, who, when the ship bearing the image of the mother of the Gods had been stranded in the Tiber, attached her girdle to its prow, and vindicated her challenged chastity by drawing with her virgin hand the ponderous mass which strong men had sought in vain to move. We find it in the prophetic gift so often attributed to virgins,² in the law which sheltered them from the degradation of an execution,³ in the language of Statius, who described marriage itself as a fault.⁴ In Christianity one great source of the attraction of the faith has been the ascription of virginity to its female ideal. The Catholic monastic system has been so constructed as to draw many thousands from the sphere of active duty; its irrevocable vows have doubtless led to much suffering and not a little crime; its opposition to the normal development of our mingled nature has often resulted in grave aberrations of the imagination, and it has placed its ban upon domestic affections and sympathies which have a very high moral value; but in its central conception, that the purely animal side of our being is

at low and a degraded side, it reflects, I believe, with perfect fidelity the feelings of our nature.

To these considerations some others of a different nature may be added. It is not true that some ancient nations regarded polygamy as good in the same sense as others regarded chastity. There is a great difference between deeming a state permissible and proposing it as a condition of sanctity. If Mohammedans people paradise with images of sensuality, it is not because these form their ideal of holiness. It is because they regard earth as the sphere of virtue, heaven as that of simple enjoyment. If some pagan nations deified sensuality, this was simply because the deification of the forces of nature, of which the prolific energy is one of the most conspicuous, is among the earliest forms of religion, and long precedes the identification of the Deity with a moral ideal.⁵ If there have been nations who attached a certain stigma to virginity, this has not been because they esteemed sensuality intrinsically holier than chastity, but because a scanty, warlike people whose position in the world depends chiefly on the number of its warriors will naturally make it its main object to encourage population. This was especially the case with the ancient Jews, who always regarded extreme populousness as indissolubly connected with national prosperity, whose religion was essentially patriotic, and among whom the possibility of becoming an ancestor of

¹ The history of the vestals, which forms one of the most curious pages in the moral history of Rome, has been fully treated by the Abbe Nadal, in an extremely interesting and well-written memoir, read before the Académie des Belles Lettres, and republished in 1725. It was believed that the prayer of a vestal could arrest a fugitive slave in his flight, provided he had not got past the city walls. Pliny mentions this belief as general in his time. The records of the order contained many miracles wrought at different times to save the vestals or to vindicate their questioned purity, and also one miracle which is very remarkable as furnishing a precise parallel to that of the Jew who was struck dead for touching the ark to prevent its falling.

² As, for example, the Sibyls and Cassandra. The same prophetic power was attributed in India to virgins (Clem. Alexandr. *Strom.* iii. 7).

³ This custom continued to the worst period of the Empire, though it was shamefully and characteristically evaded. After the fall of Sejanus the senate had no compunction in putting his innocent daughter to death, but their religious feelings were shocked at the idea of a virgin falling beneath the axe. So by way of improving matters "fuit constuprata est prius a carnifice, quasi impium esset virginem in carcere perire" (Dion Cassius, lvi. 11). See, too, Tacitus, *Annal.* v. 9. If a vestal met a prisoner going to execution, the prisoner was spared, provided the vestal declared that the encounter was accidental. On the reverence the ancients paid to virgins see Justus Lipsius, *De l'età et l'estât des Vestalibus*.

⁴ See his picture of the first night of marriage.—

"Tacite subit ille supremis
Virginitatis amor, primæque modestia culpæ
Confundit vultus. Tunc ora rigantur, honestis
Imbribus." (*Thebaidos*, lib. ii. 432-34.)

⁵ Bees (which Virgil said had in them something of the divine nature) were supposed by the ancients to be the special emblems or models of chastity. It was a common belief that the bee mother begot her young without losing her virginity. Thus "a fragment ascribed to Petronius we read—

"Sic sine concubitu textis apibus excitæ ceris
Fervet, et audaci militæ castra replet."
(Petron. *De Varia Animalium Generatione*.) So, too, Virgil.—

"Quod neque concubitu indulgent nec corpora segnes
In Venerem solvunt aut foetus nixibus edunt."
(*Georg.* iv. 198-199.) Plutarch says that an unchaste person cannot approach bees, for they immediately attack him and cover him with stings. Fire was also regarded as a type of virginity. Thus Ovid, speaking of the vestals, says—

"Nataque de flamma corpora nulla vides
Jure igitur virgo est, quæ semina nulla remittit
Nec capit, et comites virginittatis amat."

"The Egyptians believed that there are no males among vultures, and they accordingly made that bird an emblem of nature" (Ammianus Marcellinus, xvi. 4).

² "La divinité étant considérée comme renfermant en elle toutes les qualités, toutes les forces intellectuelles et morales de l'homme, chacune de ces forces ou de ces qualités, conçue séparément, s'offrait comme un Être divin.... De-là aussi les contradictions les plus choquantes dans les notions que les anciens avaient des attributs divins" (Maury, *Hist. des Religions de la Grèce antique*, tome i pp. 578-579.)

the Messiah had imparted a peculiar dignity to child-birth. Yet even among the Jews the Essenes regarded virginity as the ideal of sanctity.

The reader will now be in a position to perceive the utter futility of the objections which from the time of Locke have been continually brought against the theory of natural moral perceptions, upon the ground that some actions which were admitted as lawful in one age have been regarded as immoral in another. All these become absolutely worthless when it is perceived that in every age virtue has consisted in the cultivation of the same feelings, though the standards of excellence attained have been different. The terms higher and lower, nobler or less noble, purer or less pure, represent moral facts with much greater fidelity than the terms right or wrong, or virtue or vice. There is a certain sense in which moral distinctions are absolute and immutable. There is another sense in which they are altogether relative and transient. There are some acts which are so manifestly and grossly opposed to our moral feelings that they are regarded as wrong in the very earliest stages of the cultivation of these feelings. There are distinctions, such as that between truth and falsehood, which from their nature assume at once a sharpness of definition that separates them from mere virtues of degree, though even in these cases there are wide variations in the amount of scrupulosity that is in different periods required. But, apart from positive commands, the sole external rule enabling men to designate acts, not simply as better or worse, but as positively right or wrong, is, I conceive, the standard of society; not an arbitrary standard like that which Mandeville imagined, but the level which society has attained in the cultivation of what our moral faculty tells us is the higher or virtuous part of our nature. He who falls below this is obstructing the tendency which is the essence of virtue. He who merely attains this may not be justified in his own conscience, or, in other words, by the standard of his own moral development, but, as far as any external rule is concerned, he has done his duty. He who rises above this has entered into the region of things which it is virtuous to do, but not vicious to neglect—a region known among Catholic theologians by the name of "counsels of perfection."

No discussions, I conceive, can be more idle than whether slavery, or the slaughter of prisoners in war, or gladiatorial shows, or polygamy, are essentially wrong. They may be wrong now—they were not so once—and when an ancient countenanced by his example one or other of these, he was not committing a crime. The unchangeable proposition for which we contend is this—that benevolence is always a virtuous disposition—that the sensual part of our nature is always the lower part.

At this point, however, a very difficult problem naturally arises. Admitting that our moral nature is superior to our intellectual or physical nature; admitting, too, that by the constitution of our being we perceive ourselves to be under an obligation to develop our nature to its perfection, establishing the supreme ascendancy of moral motives: the question still remains whether the disparity between the different parts of our being is such that no material or intellectual advantage, however great, may be rightly purchased by any sacrifice of our moral nature, however small. This is the great question of casuistry, the question which divines express by asking whether the end ever justifies the means; and on this subject there exists among theologians a doctrine which is absolutely unrealised, which no one ever dreams of applying to actual life, but of which it may be truly said that, though propounded with the best intentions, it would, if acted upon, be utterly incompatible with the very rudiments of civilisation. It is said that an undoubted sin, even the most trivial, is a thing in its essence and in its consequences so unspeakably dreadful that no conceivable material or intellectual advantage can counterbalance it; that rather than it should be committed, it would be better that any amount of calamity which did not bring with it sin should be endured, even that the whole human race should perish in agonies.^x If this be the case, it is manifest that the supreme object of humanity should be sinlessness, and it is equally manifest that the means to this end is the absolute

^x "The Church holds that it were better for sun and moon to drop from heaven, for the earth to fail, and for all the many millions who are upon it to die of starvation in extremest agony, so far as temporal affliction goes, than that one soul, I will not say should be lost, but should commit one single venial sin, should tell one wilful untruth, though it harmed no one, or steal one poor farthing without excuse." (Newman's *Anglican Difficulties*, p. 190.)

suppression of the desires. To expand the circle of wants is necessarily to multiply temptations, and therefore to increase the number of sins. It may, indeed, elevate the moral standard, for a torpid sinlessness is not a high moral condition; but if every sin be what these theologians assert, if it be a thing deserving eternal agony, and so inconceivably frightful that the ruin of a world is a less evil than its commission, even moral advantages are utterly incommensurate with it. No heightening of the moral tone, no depth or ecstasy of devotion, can for a moment be placed in the balance. The consequences of this doctrine, if applied to actual life, would be so extravagant that their simple statement is a refutation. A sovereign, when calculating the consequences of a war, should reflect that a single sin occasioned by that war, a single blasphemy of a wounded soldier, the robbery of a single hencoop, the violation of the purity of a single woman, is a greater calamity than the ruin of the entire commerce of his nation, the loss of her most precious provinces, the destruction of all her power. He must believe that the evil of the increase of unchastity, which invariably results from the formation of an army, is an immeasurably greater calamity than any material or political disasters that army can possibly avert. He must believe that the most fearful plague or famine that desolates his land should be regarded as a matter of rejoicing, if it has but the feeblest and most transient influence in repressing vice. He must believe that if the agglomeration of his people in great cities adds but one to the number of their sins, no possible intellectual or material advantages can prevent the construction of cities being a fearful calamity. According to this principle every elaboration of life, every amusement that brings multitudes together, almost every art, every accession of wealth that awakens or stimulates desires, is an evil, for all these become the sources of some sins, and their advantages are for the most part purely terrestrial. The entire structure of civilisation is founded upon the belief that it is a good thing to cultivate intellectual and material capacities, even at the cost of certain moral evils which we are often able accurately to foresee.¹ The time

may come when the man who lays the foundation-stone of a manufacture will be able to predict with assurance in what proportion the drunkenness and the unchastity of his city will be increased by his enterprise. Yet he will still pursue that enterprise, and mankind will pronounce it to be good.

The theological doctrine on the subject, considered in its full stringency, though professed by many, is, as I have said, realised and consistently acted on by no one; but the practical judgments of mankind concerning the extent of the superiority of moral over all other interests vary greatly, and this variation supplies one of the most serious objections to intuitive moralists. The nearest practical approach to the theological estimate of a sin may be found in the ranks of the ascetics. Their whole system rests upon the belief that it is a thing so transcendently dreadful as to bear no proportion or appreciable relation to any earthly interests. Starting from this belief, the ascetic makes it the exclusive object of his life to avoid sinning. He accordingly abstains from all the active business of society, relinquishes all worldly aims and ambitions, dulls by continued discipline his natural desires, and endeavours to pass a life of complete absorption in religious exercises. And in all this his conduct is reasonable and consistent. The natural course of every man who adopts this estimate of the enormity of sin is at every cost to avoid all external influences that can prove temptations, and to attenuate as far as possible his own appetites and emotions. It is in this respect that the exaggerations of theologians paralyse our moral being. For the diminution of sins, however important, is but one part of moral progress. Whenever it is forced into a disproportionate prominence we find tame, languid, and mutilated natures, destitute of all fire and energy, and this tendency has been still further aggravated by the extreme prominence usually given to the virtue of gentleness, which may indeed be attained by men of strong natures and vehement emotions, but is evidently more congenial to a somewhat feeble and passionless character.

Ascetic practices are manifestly and

called "The Limitations of Morality," in a very ingenious and suggestive little work of the Benthamite school, called *Essays by a Barrister* (reprinted from the *Saturday Review*).

¹ There is a remarkable dissertation on this subject

rapidly disappearing, and their decline is a striking proof of the evanescence of the moral notions of which they were the expression; but in many existing questions relating to the same matter we find perplexing diversity of judgment. We find it in the contrast between the system of education usually adopted by the Catholic priesthood, which has for its pre-eminent object to prevent sins, and for its means a constant and minute supervision, and the English system of public schools, which is certainly not the most fitted to guard against the possibility of sin, or to foster any very delicate scrupulosity of feeling; but is intended, and popularly supposed, to secure the healthy expansion of every variety of capacity. We find it in the widely different attitudes which good men in different periods have adopted towards religious opinions they believe to be false; some, like the reformers, refusing to participate in any superstitious service, or to withhold on any occasion, or at any cost, their protest against what they regarded as a lie; others, like most ancient, and some modern philosophers and politicians, combining the most absolute personal incredulity with an assiduous observance of superstitious rites, and strongly censuring those who disturbed delusions which are useful or consolatory to the people; while a third class silently, but without protest, withdraw themselves from the observances, and desire that their opinions should have a free expression in literature, but at the same time discourage all proselytising efforts to force them rudely on unprepared minds. We find it in the frequent conflicts between the political economist and the Catholic priest on the subject of early marriages, the former opposing them on the ground that it is an essential condition of material well-being that the standard of comfort should not be depressed, the latter advocating them on the ground that the postponement of marriages, through prudential motives, by any large body of men, is the fertile mother of sin. We find it most conspicuously in the marked diversities of tolerance manifested in different communities towards amusements which may in themselves be perfectly innocent, but which prove the sources or the occasions of vice. The Scotch Puritans probably represent one extreme, the Parisian society of the Empire the other, while

the position of average Englishmen is perhaps equidistant between them. Yet this difference, great as it is, is a difference not of principle, but of degree. No Puritan seriously desires to suppress every clan-gathering, every highland game which may have occasioned an isolated fit of drunkenness, though he may be unable to show that it has prevented any sin that would otherwise have been committed. No Frenchman will question that there is a certain amount of demoralisation which should not be tolerated, however great the enjoyment that accompanies it. Yet the one dwells almost exclusively upon the moral, the other upon the attractive, nature of a spectacle. Between these there are numerous gradations, which are shown in frequent disputes about the merits and demerits of the racecourse, the ball, the theatre, and the concert. Where then, it may be asked, is the line to be drawn? By what rule can the point be determined at which an amusement becomes vitiated by the evil of its consequences?

To these questions the intuitive moralist is obliged to answer that such a line cannot be drawn, that such a rule does not exist. The colours of our moral nature are rarely separated by the sharp lines of our vocabulary. They fade and blend into one another so imperceptibly that it is impossible to mark a precise point of transition. The end of man is the full development of his being in that symmetry and proportion which nature has assigned it, and such a development implies that the supreme, the predominant, motive of his life should be moral. If in any society or individual this ascendancy does not exist, that society or that individual is in a diseased and abnormal condition. But the superiority of the moral part of our nature, though unquestionable, is indefinite, not infinite, and the prevailing standard is not at all times the same. The moralist can only lay down general principles. Individual feeling or the general sentiment of society must draw the application.

The vagueness that on such questions confessedly hangs over the intuitive theory has always been insisted upon by members of the opposite school, who in "the greatest happiness principle" claim to possess a definite formulary, enabling them to draw boldly the frontier line between the lawful and the illicit, and to remove moral disputes from the

domain of feeling to that of demonstration. But this claim, which forms the great attraction of the utilitarian school, is, if I mistake not, one of the grossest of impostures. We compare with accuracy and confidence the value of the most various material commodities, for we mean by this term exchangeable value, and we have a common measure of exchange. But we seek in vain for such a measure enabling us to compare different kinds of utility or happiness. Thus, to take a very familiar example, the question may be proposed whether excursion trains from a country district to a seaport town produce more good than evil, whether a man governed by moral principles should encourage or oppose them. They give innocent and healthy enjoyment to many thousands, they enlarge in some degree the range of their ideas, they can hardly be said to prevent any sin that would otherwise have been committed, they give rise to many cases of drunkenness, each of which, according to the theological doctrine we have reviewed, should be deemed a more dreadful calamity than the earthquake of Lisbon or a visitation of the cholera, but which have not usually any lasting terrestrial effects; they also often produce a measure, and sometimes no small measure, of more serious vice, and it is probable that hundreds of women may trace their first fall to the excursion train. We have here a number of advantages and disadvantages, the first being intellectual and physical, and the second moral. Nearly all moralists would acknowledge that a few instances of immorality would not prevent the excursion train being, on the whole, a good thing. All would acknowledge that very numerous instances would more than counterbalance its advantages. The intuitive moralist confesses that he is unable to draw a precise line showing where the moral evils outweigh the physical benefits. In what possible respect the introduction of Benthamite formularies improves the matter I am unable to understand. No utilitarian would reduce the question to one of simple majority, or would have the cynicism to balance the ruin of one woman by the day's enjoyment of another. The impossibility of drawing in such cases a distinct line of division is no argument against the intuitive moralist, for that impossibility is shared to the full extent by his rival.

There are, as we have seen, two kinds of interest with which utilitarian moralists are concerned—the private interest which they believe to be the ultimate motive, and the public interest which they believe to be the end, of all virtue. With reference to the first, the intuitive moralist denies that a selfish act can be a virtuous or meritorious one. If a man, when about to commit a theft, became suddenly conscious of the presence of a policeman, and from fear of arrest and punishment were to abstain from the act he would otherwise have committed, this abstinence would not appear in the eyes of mankind to possess any moral value; and if he were determined partly by conscientious motives and partly by fear, the presence of the latter element would, in proportion to its strength, detract from his merit. But although selfish considerations are distinctly opposed to virtuous ones, it would be a mistake to imagine they can never ultimately have a purely moral influence. In the first place, a well-ordered system of threats and punishments marks out the path of virtue with a distinctness of definition it could scarcely have otherwise attained. In the next place, it often happens that when the mind is swayed by a conflict of motives, the expectation of reward or punishment will so reinforce or support the virtuous motives as to secure their victory; and, as every triumph of these motives increases their strength and weakens the opposing principles, a step will thus have been made towards moral perfection, which will render more probable the future triumph of unassisted virtue.

With reference to the interests of society, there are two distinct assertions to be made. The first is that, although the pursuit of the welfare of others is undoubtedly one form of virtue, it does not include all virtue; or, in other words, that there are forms of virtue which, even if beneficial to mankind, do not become virtuous on that account, but have an intrinsic excellence which is not proportioned to or dependent on their utility. The second is that there may occasionally arise considerations of extreme and overwhelming utility that may justify a sacrifice of these virtues. This sacrifice may be made in various ways—as, when a man undertakes an enterprise which is in itself perfectly innocent, but which, in addition to its great material advantages, will, as he

well knows, produce a certain measure of crime; or when, abstaining from a protest, he tacitly countenances beliefs which he considers untrue because he regards them as transcendently useful; or again when, for the benefit of others, and under circumstances of great urgency, he utters a direct falsehood, as, for example, when by such means alone he can save the life of an innocent man.* But the fact that in these cases considerations of extreme utility are suffered to override considerations of morality is in no degree inconsistent with the facts that the latter differ in kind from the former, that they are of a higher nature, and that they may supply adequate and legitimate motives of action not only distinct from, but even in opposition to, utility. Gold and silver are different metals. Gold is more valuable than silver; yet a very small quantity of gold may be advantageously exchanged for a very large quantity of silver.

The last class of objections to the theory of natural moral perceptions which it is necessary for me to notice arises from a very mischievous equivocation in the word natural." The term "natural man" is sometimes regarded as synonymous with man in his primitive or barbarous condition, and sometimes as expressing all in a civilised man that is due to nature as distinguished from artificial habits or acquirements. This equivocation is especially dangerous, because it implies one of the most extravagant excesses to which the sensational philosophy could be pushed—the notion that the difference between a savage and a civilised man is simply a difference of acquisition, and not at all a difference of development. In accord-

ance with this notion, those who deny original moral distinctions have ransacked the accounts of travellers for examples of savages who appeared destitute of moral sentiments, and have adduced them as conclusive evidence of their position. Now it is, I think, abundantly evident that these narratives are usually exceedingly untrustworthy.† They have been in most cases collected by uncritical and unphilosophical travellers, who knew little of the language and still less of the inner life of the people they described, whose means of information were acquired in simply traversing the country, who were more struck by moral paradox than by unostentatious virtue, who were proverbially addicted to embellishing and exaggerating the singularities they witnessed, and who very rarely investigated their origin. It should not be forgotten that the French moralists of the last [eighteenth] century, who insisted most strongly on this species of evidence, were also the dupes of one of the most curious delusions in the whole compass of literary history. Those unflinching sceptics who claimed to be the true disciples of the apostle who believed nothing that he had not touched, and whose relentless criticism played with withering effect on all the holiest feelings of our nature, and on all the tenets of traditional creeds, had discovered one happy land where the ideal had ceased to be a dream. They could point to one people whose pure and rational morality, purged from all the clouds of bigotry and enthusiasm, shone with an almost dazzling splendour above the ignorance and superstition of Europe. Voltaire forgot to gibe, and Helvétius kindled into enthusiasm, when China and the Chinese rose before their minds, and to this semi-barbarous nation they habitually attributed maxims of conduct that neither Roman nor Christian virtue had ever realised.

But putting aside these considerations, and assuming the fidelity of the pictures of savage life upon which these writers rely, they fail to prove the point for which they are adduced. The moralists I am

* The following passage, though rather vague and rhetorical, is not unimpressive: "Où, dit Jacobi, je mentrais comme Desdemona mourante, je tromperais comme Oreste quand il veut mourir à la place de Pylade, j'assassinerais comme Timoléon, je serais parjure comme Epaminondas et Jean de Witt, je me déterminerais au suicide comme Caton, je serais sacrilège comme David, car j'ai la certitude en moi-même qu'en pardonnant à ces fautes suivant la lettre l'homme exerce le droit souverain que la majesté de son être lui confère, il appose le sceau de sa divine nature sur la grâce qu'il accorde." (Barchou de Penhoen, *Hist. de la Philos. allemande*, tome 1 p. 295.)

† This equivocation seems to me to lie at the root of the famous dispute whether man is by nature a social being, or whether, as Hobbes averred, the state of nature is a state of war. Few persons who have observed the recent light thrown on the subject will question that the primitive condition of man was that of savage life, and fewer still will question that savage life is a state of war. On the other hand, it is, I think, equally certain that man necessarily becomes a social being in exact proportion to the development of the capacities of his nature.

† One of the best living authorities on this question writes: "The asserted existence of savages so low as to have no moral standard is too groundless to be discussed. Every human tribe has its general views as to what conduct is right and what wrong, and each generation hands the standard on to the next. Even in the details of their moral standards, wide as their differences are, there is yet wider agreement throughout the human race." (Tylor on Primitive Society, *Contemporary Review*, April, 1873, p. 702.)

defending assert that we possess a natural power of distinguishing between the higher and lower parts of our nature. But the eye of the mind, like the eye of the body, may be closed. Moral and rational faculties may be alike dormant, and they will certainly be so if men are wholly immersed in the gratification of their senses. Man is like a plant, which requires a favourable soil for the full expansion of its natural or innate powers.* Yet those powers, both rational and moral, are there, and when quickened into action each will discharge its appointed functions. If it could be proved that there are savages who are absolutely destitute of the progressive energy which distinguishes reason from instinct, and of the moral aspiration which constitutes virtue, this would not prove that rational or moral faculties form no part of their nature. If it could be shown that there is a stage of barbarism in which man knows, feels, and does nothing that might not be known, felt, and done by an ape, this would not be sufficient to reduce him to the level of the brute. There would still be this broad distinction between them—the one possesses a capacity for development which the other does not possess. Under favourable circumstances the savage will become a reasoning, progressive, and moral man; under no circumstances can a similar transformation be effected in the ape. It may be as difficult to detect the oak-leaf in the acorn as in the stone; yet the acorn may be converted into an oak: the stone will always continue to be a stone.*

* The distinction between innate faculties evolved by experience and innate ideas independent of experience, and the analogy between the expansion of the former and that of the bud into the flower, has been very happily treated by Reid. (*On the Active Powers*, essay iii. chap. viii. p. 4.) Professor Sedgwick, criticising Locke's notion of the soul being originally like a sheet of white paper, beautifully says: "Naked man comes from his mother's womb, endowed with limbs and senses indeed well fitted to the material world, yet powerless from want of use; and as for knowledge, his soul is one unvaried blank; yet has this blank been already touched by a celestial hand, and when plunged in the colours which surround it, it takes not its tinge from accident but design, and comes forth covered with a glorious pattern" (*On the Studies of the University*, p. 54.) Leibnitz says: "L'esprit n'est point une table rasée. Il est tout plein de caractères que la sensation ne peut que découvrir et mettre en lumière au lieu de les y imprimer. Je me suis servi de la comparaison d'une pierre de marbre qui a des veines plutôt que d'une pierre de marbre tout unie. . . S'il y avait dans la pierre des veines qui marquassent la figure d'Hercule préférentiellement à d'autres figures . . . Hercule y serait comme inné en quelque façon, quoiqu'il fallût du travail pour découvrir ces veines." (*Critique de l'Essai sur l'Entendement*.)

* The argument against the intuitive moralists

The foregoing pages will, I trust, have exhibited with sufficient clearness the nature of the two great divisions of moral philosophy—the school which proceeds from the primitive truth that all men desire happiness, and endeavours out of this fact to evolve all ethical doctrines, and the school which traces our moral systems to an intuitive perception that certain parts of our nature are higher or better than others. It is obvious that this difference concerning the origin of our moral conceptions forms part of the very much wider metaphysical question, whether our ideas are derived exclusively from sensation or whether they spring in part from the mind itself. The latter theory in antiquity was chiefly represented by the Platonic doctrine of pre-existence, which rested on the conviction that the mind has the power of drawing from its own depths certain conceptions or ideas which cannot be explained by any post-natal experience, and must therefore, it was said, have been acquired in a previous existence. In the seventeenth century it took the form of a doctrine of innate ideas. But though this theory, in the form in which it was professed by Lord Herbert of Cherbury and assailed by Locke, has almost disappeared, the doctrine that we possess certain faculties which by their own expansion, and not by the reception of notions from without, are not only capable of, but must necessarily attain, certain ideas, as the bud must necessarily expand into its own specific flower, still occupies a distinguished place in the world of speculation, and its probability has been greatly strengthened by recent observations of the range and potency of instinct in animals. From some passages in his *Essay*, it appears that Locke himself had

derived from savage life was employed at some length by Locke. Paley then adopted it, taking a history of base ingratitude related by Valerius Maximus, and asking whether a savage would view it with disapprobation. (*Moral Phil.* book i. ch. 5.) Dugald Stewart (*Active and Moral Powers*, vol. i. pp. 220-231) and other writers have very fully answered this, but the same objection has been revived in another form by Mr. Austin, who supposes (*Lectures on Jurisprudence*, vol. i. pp. 82-83) a savage who first meets a hunter carrying a dead deer, kills the hunter and steals the deer, and is afterwards himself assailed by another hunter whom he kills. Mr. Austin asks whether the savage would perceive a moral difference between these two acts of homicide? Certainly not. In this early stage of development, the savage recognises a duty of justice and humanity to the members of his tribe, but to no one beyond this circle. He is in a "state of war" with the foreign hunter. He has a right to kill the hunter, and the hunter an equal right to kill him.

a confused perception of this distinction,* which was by no means unknown to previous writers; and after the publication of the philosophy of Locke it was clearly exhibited by Shaftesbury and Leibnitz, and incidentally noticed by Berkeley, long before Kant established his distinction between the form and the matter of our knowledge, between ideas which are received *a priori* and ideas which are received *a posteriori*. The existence or non-existence of this source of ideas forms the basis of the opposition between the inductive philosophy of England and the French philosophy of the eighteenth century on the one hand, and the German and Scotch philosophies, as well as the French eclecticism of the nineteenth century, upon the other. The tendency of the first school is to restrict as far as possible the active powers of the human mind, and to aggrandise as far as possible the empire of external circumstances. The other school dwells especially on the instinctive side of our nature, and maintains the existence of certain intuitions of the reason, certain categories or original conceptions, which are presupposed in all our reasonings, and cannot be resolved into sensations. The boast of the first school is that its searching analysis leaves no mental phenomenon unsolved, and its attraction is the extreme simplicity it can attain. The second school multiplies faculties or original principles, concentrates its attention mainly upon the nature of our understanding, and asserts very strongly the initiative force both of our will and of our intellect.

We find this connection between a philosophy based upon the senses and a morality founded upon utility from the earliest times. Aristotle was distinguished among the ancients for the emphasis with which he dwelt upon the utility of virtue, and it was from the writings of Aristotle

* Everyone who is acquainted with metaphysics knows that there has been an almost endless controversy about Locke's meaning on this point. The fact seems to be that Locke, like most great originators of thought, and indeed more than most, often failed to perceive the ultimate consequences of his principles, and partly through some confusion of thought, and partly through unhappiness of expression, has left passages involving the conclusions of both schools. As a matter of history, the sensual school of Condillac grew professedly out of his philosophy. In defence of the legitimacy of the process by which these writers evolved their conclusions from the premisses of Locke, the reader may consult the very able lectures of M. Cousin on Locke. The other side has been treated, among others, by Dugald Stewart, in his *Dissertation*, by Professor Webb in his *Intellectualism of Locke*, and by Mr Rogers in an essay reprinted from the *Edinburgh Review*.

that the schoolmen derived the famous formula which has become the motto of the school of Locke. Locke himself devoted especial research to the refutation of the doctrine of a natural moral sense, which he endeavoured to overthrow by a catalogue of immoral practices that exist among savages; and the hesitation he occasionally exhibited in his moral doctrines corresponds not unfaithfully to the obscurity thrown over his metaphysics by the admission of reflection as a source of ideas. If his opponent Leibnitz made pleasure the object of moral action, it was only that refined pleasure which is produced by the contemplation of the happiness of others. When, however, Condillac and his followers, removing reflection from the position Locke had assigned it, reduced the philosophy of sensation to its simplest expression, and when the Scotch and German writers elaborated the principles of the opposite school, the moral tendencies of both were indisputably manifested. Everywhere the philosophy of sensation was accompanied by the morals of interest, and the ideal philosophy by an assertion of the existence of a moral faculty; and every influence that has affected the prevailing theory concerning the origin of our ideas, has exercised a corresponding influence upon the theories of ethics.

The great movement of modern thought, of which Bacon was at once the highest representative and one of the chief agents, has been truly said to exhibit a striking resemblance, and at the same time a striking contrast, to the movement of ancient thought, which was effected chiefly by the genius of Socrates. In the name of utility Socrates diverted the intellect of antiquity from the fantastic cosmogonies with which it had long been occupied, to the study of the moral nature of man. In the name of the same utility Bacon laboured to divert the modern intellect from the idle metaphysical speculations of the schoolmen to natural science, to which newly discovered instruments of research, his own sounder method, and a cluster of splendid intellects, soon gave an unprecedented impulse. To the indirect influence of this movement, perhaps, even more than to the direct teaching of Gassendi and Locke, may be ascribed the great ascendancy of sensational philosophy among modern nations, and it is also connected

with some of the most important differences between ancient and modern history. Among the ancients the human mind was chiefly directed to philosophical speculations, in which the law seems to be perpetual oscillation, while among the moderns it has rather tended towards physical science, and towards inventions, in which the law is perpetual progress. National power, and in most cases even national independence, implied among the ancients the constant energy of high intellectual or moral qualities. When the heroism or the genius of the people had relaxed when an enervating philosophy or the lassitude that often accompanies civilisation arrived, the whole edifice speedily tottered, the sceptre was transferred to another state, and the same history was elsewhere reproduced. A great nation bequeathed indeed to its successors works of transcendent beauty in art and literature, philosophies that could avail only when the mind had risen to their level, examples that might stimulate the heroism of an aspiring people, warnings that might sometimes arrest it on the path to ruin. But all these acted only through the mind. In modern times, on the other hand, if we put aside religious influences, the principal causes of the superiority of civilised men are to be found in inventions which when once discovered can never pass away, and the effects of which are in consequence in a great measure removed from the fluctuations of moral life. The cause which most disturbed or accelerated the normal progress of society in antiquity was the appearance of great men; in modern times it has been the appearance of great inventions. Printing has secured the intellectual achievements of the past, and furnished a sure guarantee of future progress. Gunpowder and military machinery have rendered the triumph of barbarians impossible. Steam has united nations in the closest bonds. Innumerable mechanical contrivances have given a decisive preponderance to that industrial element which has coloured all the developments of our civilisation. The leading characteristics of modern societies are in consequence marked out much more by the triumphs of inventive skill than by the sustained energy of moral causes.

Now it will appear evident, I think, to those who reflect carefully upon their own minds, and upon the course of history, that these three things—the study

of physical science, inventive skill, and industrial enterprise—are connected in such a manner that when in any nation there is a long-sustained tendency towards one the others will naturally follow. This connection is partly that of cause and effect, for success in either of these branches facilitates success in the others. a knowledge of natural laws being the basis of many of the most important inventions and being itself acquired by the aid of instruments of research, while industry is manifestly indebted to both. But besides this connection there is a connection of congruity. The same cast or habit of thought develops itself in these three forms. They all represent the natural tendencies of what is commonly called the practical as opposed to the theoretical mind, of the inductive or experimental as opposed to the deductive or ideal, of the cautious and the plodding as opposed to the imaginative and the ambitious, of the mind that tends naturally to matter as opposed to that which dwells naturally on ideas. Among the ancients the distaste for physical science, which the belief in the capricious divine government of all natural phenomena produced, and the distaste for industrial enterprise which slavery produced, conspired to favour the philosophical tendency, while among the moderns physical science and the habits of industrial life continually react upon one another.

There can be no question that the intellectual tendencies of modern times are far superior to those of antiquity, both in respect to the material prosperity they effect and to the uninterrupted progress they secure. Upon the other hand, it is, I think, equally unquestionable that this superiority is purchased by the sacrifice of something of dignity and elevation of character. It is when the cultivation of mental and moral qualities is deemed the primary object, when the mind and its interests are most removed from the things of sense, that great characters are most frequent, and the standard of heroism is most high. In this, as in other cases, the law of congruity is supreme. The mind that is concentrated most on the properties of matter is predisposed to derive all ideas from the senses, while that which dwells naturally upon its own operations inclines to an ideal philosophy, and the prevailing system of morals depends largely upon the distinction.

In the next place, we may observe that

the practical consequences, so far as ethics are concerned,¹ of the opposition between the two great schools of morals are less than might be inferred from the intellectual chasm that separates them. Moralists grow up in the atmosphere of society, and experience all the common feelings of other men. Whatever theory of the genesis of morals they may form, they commonly recognise as right the broad moral principles of the world, and they endeavour—though, I have attempted to show, not always successfully—to prove that these principles may be accounted for and justified by their system. The great practical difference between the schools lies, not in the difference of the virtues they inculcate, but in the different degrees of prominence they assign to each, in the different casts of mind they represent and promote. As Adam Smith observed, a system like that of the Stoics, which makes self-control the ideal of excellence, is especially favourable to the heroic qualities; a system like that of Hutcheson, which resolves virtue into benevolence, to the amiable qualities; and utilitarian systems to the industrial virtues. A society in which any one of these three forms of moral excellence is especially prominent has a natural tendency towards the corresponding theory of ethics; but, on the other hand, this theory, when formed, reacts upon and strengthens the moral tendency that elicited it. The Epicureans and the Stoics can each claim a great historical fact in their favour. When every other Greek school modified or abandoned the teaching of its founder, the disciples of Epicurus at Athens preserved their hereditary faith unsullied and unchanged.² On the other hand, in the Roman Empire, almost every great character, almost

every effort in the cause of liberty, emanated from the ranks of Stoicism, while Epicureanism was continually identified with corruption and with tyranny. The intuitive school, not having a clear and simple external standard, has often proved somewhat liable to assimilate with superstition and mysticism, to become fantastic, unreasoning, and unpractical; while the prominence accorded to interest, and the constant intervention of calculation in utilitarian systems, have a tendency to depress the ideal, and give a sordid and unheroic ply to the character. The first, dwelling on the moral initiative, elevates the tone and standard of life. The second, revealing the influence of surrounding circumstances upon character, leads to the most important practical reforms.³ Each school has thus proved in some sense at once the corrective and the complement of the other. Each, when pushed to its extreme results, produces evils which lead to the reappearance of its rival.

Having now considered at some length the nature and tendencies of the theories according to which men test and cultivate their moral feelings, we may pass to an examination of the process according to which these feelings are developed, or, in other words, of the causes that lead societies to elevate their moral standard and determine their preference of some particular kinds of virtue. The observations I have to offer on this subject will be of a somewhat miscellaneous character; but they will all, I trust, tend to show the nature of the changes that constitute moral history, and to furnish us with some general principles which may be applied in detail in the succeeding chapters.

It is sufficiently evident that, in proportion to the high organisation of society, the amiable and the social virtues will be cultivated at the expense of the heroic and the ascetic. A courageous endurance

¹ I make this qualification, because I believe that the denial of a moral nature in man capable of perceiving the distinction between duty and interest and the rightful supremacy of the former, is both philosophically and actually subversive of natural theology.

² See the forcible passage in the life of Epicurus by Diogenes Laërtius. So Mackintosh: "It is remarkable that, while, of the three professors who sat in the Porch from Zeno to Posidonius, every one either softened or exaggerated the doctrines of his predecessor, and while the beautiful and reverend philosophy of Plato had in his own Academy degenerated into a scepticism which did not spare morality itself, the system of Epicurus remained without change; his disciples continued for ages to show personal honour to his memory in a manner which may seem unaccountable among those who were taught to measure propriety by a calculation of palpable and outward usefulness." (*Dissertation on Ethical Philosophy*, p. 85, ed. 1876. See also, Tennemann, *Manuel de la Philosophie*, ed. Cousin, tome i. p. 211.)

³ Thus, e.g., the magnificent chapters of Helvétius on the moral effects of despotism form one of the best modern contributions to political ethics. We have a curious illustration of the emphasis with which this school dwells on the moral importance of institutions in a memoir of M. De Tracy, *On the Best Plan of National Education*, which appeared first towards the close of the French Revolution, and was reprinted during the Restoration. The author, who was one of the most distinguished of the disciples of Condillac, argued that the most efficient of all ways of educating a people is the establishment of a good system of police, for the constant association of the ideas of crime and punishment in the minds of the masses is the one effectual method of creating moral habits, which will continue to act when the fear of punishment is removed.

of suffering is probably the first form of human virtue, the one conspicuous instance in savage life of a course of conduct opposed to natural impulses, and pursued through a belief that it is higher or nobler than the opposite. In a disturbed, disorganised, and warlike society acts of great courage and great endurance are very frequent, and determine to a very large extent the course of events; but in proportion to the organisation of communities the occasions for their display, and their influence when displayed, are alike restricted. Besides this, the tastes and habits of civilisation, the innumerable inventions designed to promote comfort and diminish pain, set the current of society in a direction altogether different from heroism, and somewhat emasculate, though they refine and soften, the character. Asceticism, again—including under this term not merely the monastic system, but also all efforts to withdraw from the world in order to cultivate a high degree of sanctity—belongs naturally to a society which is somewhat rude, and in which isolation is frequent and easy. When men become united in very close bonds of co-operation, when industrial enterprise becomes very ardent, and the prevailing impulse is strongly towards material wealth and luxurious enjoyments, virtue is regarded chiefly or solely in the light of the interests of society; and this tendency is still further strengthened by the educational influence of legislation, which imprints moral distinctions very deeply on the mind, but at the same time accustoms men to measure them solely by an external and utilitarian standard.²

² An important intellectual revolution is at present taking place in England. The ascendancy in literary and philosophical questions which belonged to the writers of books is manifestly passing in a very great degree to weekly and even daily papers, which have long been supreme in politics, and have begun within the last ten years systematically to treat ethical and philosophical questions. From their immense circulation, their incontestable ability, and the power they possess of continually reiterating their distinctive doctrines—from the impatience, too, of long and elaborate writings, which newspapers generate in the public—it has come to pass that these periodicals exercise probably a greater influence than any other productions of the day, in forming the ways of thinking of ordinary educated Englishmen. The many consequences, good and evil, of this change it will be the duty of future literary historians to trace, but there is one which is, I think, much felt in the sphere of ethics. An important effect of these journals has been to evoke a large amount of literary talent in the lawyer class. Men whose professional duties would render it impossible for them to write long books are quite capable of treating philosophical subjects in the form of short essays, and have in fact become conspicuous

The first table of the law gives way to the second. Good is not loved for itself, but as the means to an end. All that virtue which is required to form upright and benevolent men is in the highest degree useful to society, but the qualities which constitute a saintly or spiritual character, as distinguished from one that is simply moral and amiable, have not the same direct, uniform, and manifest tendency to the promotion of happiness, and they are accordingly little valued.¹ In savage life, the animal nature being supreme, these higher qualities are unknown. In a very elaborate material civilisation the prevailing atmosphere is not favourable either to their production or their appreciation. Their place has usually been in an intermediate stage.

On the other hand, there are certain virtues that are the natural product of a cultivated society. Independently of all local and special circumstances, the transition of men from a barbarous or semi-civilised to a highly organised state necessarily brings with it the destruction or abridgment of the legitimate sphere of revenge, by transferring the office of punishment from the wronged person to a passionless tribunal appointed by society;² a growing substitution of pacific for warlike occupations, the introduction of refined and intellectual tastes which gradually displace amusements that derive their zest from their barbarity, the rapid multiplication of ties of connection between all classes and nations, and also the strengthening of the imagination by intellectual culture. This last faculty, considered as the power of realisation, forms the chief tie between our moral and intellectual natures. In order to pity suffering we must realise it, and the intensity of our compassion is usually proportioned to the vividness of our realisation.³ The most frightful catastrophe in

in these periodicals. There has seldom, I think, before, been a time when lawyers occupied such an important literary position as at present, or when legal ways of thinking had so great an influence over English philosophy; and this fact has been eminently favourable to the progress of utilitarianism.

¹ There are some good remarks on this point in the very striking chapter on the present condition of Christianity in *Wilberforce's Practical View*.

² See Reid's *Essays on the Active Powers*, ii. 4.

³ I say usually proportioned, because it is, I believe, possible for men to realise suffering intensely, and to derive pleasure from that very fact. This is especially the case with vindictive cruelty, but it is not, I think, altogether confined to that sphere. This question we shall have occasion to examine when discussing the gladiatorial shows. Most cruelty, however, springs from callousness, which is simply dullness of imagination.

South America, an earthquake, a shipwreck, or a battle, will elicit less compassion than the death of a single individual who has been brought prominently before our eyes. To this cause must be chiefly ascribed the extraordinary measure of compassion usually bestowed upon a conspicuous condemned criminal, the affection and enthusiasm that centre upon sovereigns, and many of the glaring inconsistencies of our historical judgments. The recollection of some isolated act of magnanimity displayed by Alexander or Cæsar moves us more than the thought of the 30,000 Thebans whom the Macedonian sold as slaves, of the 2,000 prisoners he crucified at Tyre, of the 1,100,000 men on whose corpses the Roman rose to fame. Wrapt in the pale winding-sheet of general terms, the greatest tragedies of history evoke no vivid images in our minds, and it is only by a great effort of genius that an historian can galvanise them into life. The irritation displayed by the captive of St. Helena in his bickerings with his gaoler affects most men more than the thought of the nameless thousands whom his insatiable egotism had hurried to the grave. Such is the frailty of our nature that we are more moved by the tears of some captive princess, by some trifling biographical incident that has floated down the stream of history, than by the sorrows of all the countless multitudes who perished beneath the sword of a Tamerlane, a Bajazet, or a Zenghis Khan.

If our benevolent feelings are thus the slaves of our imaginations, if an act of realisation is a necessary antecedent and condition of compassion, it is obvious that any influence that augments the range and power of this realising faculty is favourable to the amiable virtues, and it is equally evident that education has in the highest degree this effect. To an uneducated man all classes, nations, modes of thought and existence foreign to his own are unrealised, while every increase of knowledge brings with it an increase of insight, and therefore of sympathy. But the addition to his knowledge is the smallest part of this change. The realising faculty is itself intensified. Every book he reads, every intellectual exercise in which he engages, accustoms him to rise above the objects immediately present to his senses, to extend his realisations into new spheres, and reproduce in his imagination the thoughts,

feelings, and characters of others, with a vividness inconceivable to the savage. Hence, in a great degree, the tact with which a refined mind learns to discriminate and adapt itself to the most delicate shades of feeling, and hence, too, the sensitive humanity with which, in proportion to their civilisation, men realise and recoil from cruelty.

We have here, however, an important distinction to draw. Under the name of cruelty are comprised two kinds of vice, altogether different in their causes and in most of their consequences. There is the cruelty which springs from callousness and brutality, and there is the cruelty of vindictiveness. The first belongs chiefly to hard, dull, and somewhat lethargic characters; it appears most frequently in strong and conquering nations and in temperate climates, and it is due in a very great degree to defective realisation. The second is rather a feminine attribute; it is usually displayed in oppressed and suffering communities, in passionate natures, and in hot climates. Great vindictiveness is often united with great tenderness, and great callousness with great magnanimity; but a vindictive nature is rarely magnanimous, and a brutal nature is still more rarely tender. The ancient Romans exhibited a remarkable combination of great callousness and great magnanimity, while, by a curious contrast, the modern Italian character verges manifestly towards the opposite combination. Both forms of cruelty are, if I mistake not, diminished with advancing civilisation, but by different causes and in different degrees. Callous cruelty disappears before the sensitiveness of a cultivated imagination. Vindictive cruelty is diminished by the substitution of a penal system for private revenge.

The same intellectual culture that facilitates the realisation of suffering, and therefore produces compassion, facilitates also the realisation of character and opinions, and therefore produces charity. The great majority of uncharitable judgments in the world may be traced to a deficiency of imagination. The chief cause of sectarian animosity is the incapacity of most men to conceive hostile systems in the light in which they appear to their adherents, and to enter into the enthusiasm they inspire. The acquisition of this power of intellectual sympathy is a common accompaniment of a large

and cultivated mind, and wherever it exists, it assuages the rancour of controversy. The severity of our judgment of criminals is also often excessive, because the imagination finds it more easy to realise an action than a state of mind. Anyone can conceive a fit of drunkenness or a deed of violence, but few persons who are by nature very sober or very calm can conceive the natural disposition that predisposes to it. A good man brought up among all the associations of virtue reads of some horrible crime, his imagination exhausts itself in depicting its circumstances, and he then estimates the guilt of the criminal by asking himself, "How guilty should I be, were I to perpetrate such an act?" To realise with any adequacy the force of a passion we have never experienced, to conceive a type of character radically different from our own—above all, to form any just appreciation of the lawlessness and obtuseness of moral temperament, inevitably generated by a vicious education—requires a power of imagination which is among the rarest of human endowments. Even in judging our own conduct this feebleness of imagination is sometimes shown; and an old man recalling the foolish actions, but having lost the power of realising the feelings, of his youth, may be very unjust to his own past. That which makes it so difficult for a man of strong vicious passions to unbosom himself to a naturally virtuous man, is not so much the virtue as the ignorance of the latter. It is the conviction that he cannot possibly understand the force of a passion he has never felt. That which alone renders tolerable to the mind the thought of judgment by an all-pure Being, is the union of the attribute of omniscience with that of purity, for perfect knowledge implies a perfect power of realisation. The further our analysis extends and the more our realising faculties are cultivated, the more sensible we become of the influence of circumstances both upon character and upon opinions, and of the exaggerations of our first estimates of moral inequalities. Strong antipathies are thus gradually softened down. Men gain much in charity, but they lose something in zeal.

We may push, I think, this vein of thought one step farther. Our imagination, which governs our affections, has in its earlier and feeble stages little power of grasping ideas, except in a

personified and concrete form, and the power of rising to abstractions is one of the best measures of intellectual progress. The beginning of writing is the hieroglyphic or symbolical picture; the beginning of worship is fetishism or idolatry; the beginning of eloquence is pictorial, sensuous, and metaphorical; the beginning of philosophy is the myth. The imagination in its first stages concentrates itself on individuals; gradually by an effort of abstraction it rises to an institution or well-defined organisation; it is only at a very advanced stage that it can grasp a moral and intellectual principle. Loyalty, patriotism, and attachment to a cosmopolitan cause are, therefore, three forms of moral enthusiasm respectively appropriate to three successive stages of mental progress, and they have, I think, a certain analogy to idolatrous worship, church feeling, and moral culture, which are the central ideas of three stages of religious history.

The reader will readily understand that generalisations of this kind can pretend to nothing more than an approximate truth. Our knowledge of the laws of moral progress is like that of the laws of climate. We lay down general rules about the temperature to be expected as we approach or recede from the equator, and experience shows that they are substantially correct; but yet an elevated plain, or a chain of mountains, or the neighbourhood of the sea, will often in some degree derange our calculations. So, too, in the history of moral changes, innumerable special agencies, such as religious or political institutions, geographical conditions, traditions, antipathies, and affinities, exercise a certain retarding, accelerating, or deflecting influence, and somewhat modify the normal progress. The proposition for which I am contending is simply that there is such a thing as a natural history of morals, a defined and regular order in which our moral feelings are unfolded; or, in other words, that there are certain groups of virtues which spring spontaneously out of the circumstances and mental conditions of an uncivilised people, and that there are others which are the normal and appropriate products of civilisation. The virtues of uncivilised men are recognised as virtues by civilised men, but they are neither exhibited in the same perfection nor given the same position in the scale of duties. Of these moral

changes none are more obvious than the gradual decadence of heroism, both active and passive, the increase of compassion and of charity, and the transition from the enthusiasm of loyalty to those of patriotism and liberty.

Another form of virtue which usually increases with civilisation is veracity, a term which must be regarded as including something more than the simple avoidance of direct falsehood. In the ordinary intercourse of life it is readily understood that a man is offending against truth, not only when he utters a deliberate falsehood, but also when in his statement of a case he suppresses or endeavours to conceal essential facts, or makes positive assertions without having conscientiously verified their grounds. The earliest form in which the duty of veracity is enforced is probably the observance of vows, which occupy a position of much prominence in youthful religions. With the subsequent progress of civilisation we find the successive inculcation of three forms of veracity, which may be termed respectively industrial, political, and philosophical. By the first I understand that accuracy of statement or fidelity to engagements which is commonly meant when we speak of a truthful man. Though in some cases sustained by the strong sense of honour which accompanies a military spirit, this form of veracity is usually the special virtue of an industrial nation, for although industrial enterprise affords great temptations to deception, mutual confidence, and therefore strict truthfulness, are in these occupations so transcendently important that they acquire in the minds of men a value they had never before possessed. Veracity becomes the first virtue in the moral type, and no character is regarded with any kind of approbation in which it is wanting. It is made more than any other the test distinguishing a good from a bad man. We accordingly find that even where the impositions of trade are very numerous the supreme excellence of veracity is cordially admitted in theory, and it is one of the first virtues that every man aspiring to moral excellence endeavours to cultivate. This constitutes probably the chief moral superiority of nations pervaded by a strong industrial spirit over nations like the Italians, the Spaniards, or the Irish, among whom that spirit is wanting. The usual characteristic of the latter nations is a

certain laxity or instability of character, a proneness to exaggeration, a want of truthfulness in little things, an infidelity to engagements from which an Englishman, educated in the habits of industrial life, readily infers a complete absence of moral principle. But a larger philosophy and a deeper experience dispel his error. He finds that where the industrial spirit has not penetrated, truthfulness rarely occupies in the popular mind the same prominent position in the catalogue of virtues. It is not reckoned among the fundamentals of morality, and it is possible and even common to find in these nations—what would be scarcely possible in an industrial society—men who are habitually dishonest and untruthful in small things, and whose lives are nevertheless influenced by a deep religious feeling, and adorned by the consistent practice of some of the most difficult and most painful virtues. Trust in Providence, content and resignation in extreme poverty and suffering, the most genuine amiability and the most sincere readiness to assist their brethren, an adherence to their religious opinions which no persecutions and no bribes can shake, a capacity for heroic, transcendent, and prolonged self-sacrifice, may be found in some nations in men who are habitual liars and habitual cheats.

The promotion of industrial veracity is probably the single form in which the growth of manufactures exercises a favourable influence upon morals. It is possible, however, for this virtue to exist in great perfection without any corresponding growth of political veracity, or, in other words, of that spirit of impartiality which in matters of controversy desires that all opinions, arguments, and facts should be fully and fairly stated. This habit of what is commonly termed "fair play" is especially the characteristic of free communities, and it is pre-eminently fostered by political life. The practice of debate creates a sense of the injustice of suppressing one side of a case, which gradually extends through all forms of intellectual life, and becomes an essential element in the national character. But beyond all this there is a still higher form of intellectual virtue. By enlarged intellectual culture, especially by philosophic studies, men come at last to pursue truth for its own sake, to esteem it a duty to emancipate themselves from party spirit, prejudices, and passion,

and through love of truth to cultivate a judicial spirit in controversy. They aspire to the intellect not of a sectarian but of a philosopher, to the intellect not of a partisan but of a statesman.

Of these three forms of a truthful spirit the two last may be said to belong exclusively to a highly civilised society. The last, especially, can hardly be attained by any but a cultivated mind, and is one of the latest flowers of virtue that bloom in the human heart. The growth, however, both of political and philosophical veracity has been unnaturally retarded by the opposition of theologians, who made it during many centuries a main object of their policy to suppress all writings that were opposed to their views, and who, when this power had escaped their grasp, proceeded to discourage in every way impartiality of mind and judgment, and to associate it with the notion of sin.

To the observations I have already made concerning the moral effects of industrial life I shall at present add but two. The first is that an industrial spirit creates two wholly different types of character — a thrifty character and a speculating character. Both types grow out of a strong sense of the value and a strong desire for the attainment of material comforts, but they are profoundly different, both in their virtues and their vices. The chief characteristic of the one type is caution, that of the other enterprise. Thriftiness is one of the best regulators of life. It produces order, sobriety, moderation, self-restraint, patient industry, and all that cast of virtues which is designated by the term respectability; but it has also a tendency to form contracted and ungenerous natures, incapable of enthusiasm or lively sympathy. The speculating character, on the other hand, is restless, fiery, and uncertain, very liable to fall into great and conspicuous vices, impatient of routine, but by no means unfavourable to strong feelings, to great generosity or resolution. Which of these two forms the industrial spirit assumes depends upon local circumstances. Thriftiness flourishes chiefly among men placed outside the great stream of commerce, and in positions where wealth is only to be acquired by slow and steady industry, while the speculating character is most common in the great centres of enterprise and of wealth.

In the next place, it may be remarked

that industrial habits bring forethought into a new position in the moral type. In early stages of theological belief men, regarding every incident that happens to them as the result of a special divine decree, sometimes esteem it a test of faith and a form of duty to take no precautions for the future, but to leave questions of food and clothing to providential interposition. On the other hand, in an industrial civilisation, prudent forethought is regarded not simply as lawful, but as a duty, and a duty of the very highest order. A good man of the industrial type deems it a duty not to marry till he has ensured the maintenance of a possible family; if he possesses children, he regulates his expenses, not simply by the relation of his income to his immediate wants, but with a constant view to the education of his sons, to the portioning of his daughters, to the future necessities and careers of each member of his family. Constant forethought is the guiding principle of his whole life. No single circumstance is regarded as a better test of the civilisation of a people than the extent to which it is diffused among them. The old doctrine virtually disappears, and is interpreted to mean nothing more than that we should accept with resignation what no efforts and no forethought could avert.

This change is but one of several influences which, as civilisation advances, diminish the spirit of reverence among mankind. Reverence is one of those feelings which, in utilitarian systems, would occupy at best a very ambiguous position; for it is extremely questionable whether the great evils that have grown out of it in the form of religious superstition and political servitude have not made it a source of more unhappiness than happiness. Yet, however doubtful may be its position if estimated by its bearing on happiness and on progress, there are few persons who are not conscious that no character can attain a supreme degree of excellence in which a reverential spirit is wanting. Of all the forms of moral goodness it is that to which the epithet beautiful may be most emphatically applied. Yet the habits of advancing civilisation are, if I mistake not, on the whole inimical to its growth. For reverence grows out of a sense of constant dependence. It is fostered by that condition of religious thought in which men believe that each incident that befalls them is

directly and specially ordained, and when every event is, therefore, fraught with a moral import. It is fostered by that condition of scientific knowledge in which every portentous natural phenomenon is supposed to be the result of a direct divine interposition, and awakens, in consequence, emotions of humility and awe. It is fostered in that stage of political life when loyalty or reverence for the sovereign is the dominating passion, when an aristocracy, branching forth from the throne, spreads habits of deference and subordination through every village, when a revolutionary, a democratic, and a sceptical spirit are alike unknown. Every great change, either of belief or of circumstances, brings with it a change of emotions. The self-assertion of liberty, the levelling of democracy, the dissecting-knife of criticism, the economical revolutions that reduce the relations of classes to simple contracts, the agglomeration of population, and the facilities of locomotion that sever so many ancient ties, are all incompatible with the type of virtue which existed before the power of tradition was broken, and when the chastity of faith was yet unstained.

Benevolence, uprightness, enterprise, intellectual honesty, a love of freedom, and a hatred of superstition are growing around us, but we look in vain for that most beautiful character of the past, so distrustful of self and so trustful of others, so simple, so modest, and so devout, which even when, Ixion-like, it bestowed its affections upon a cloud, made its very illusions the source of some of the purest virtues of our nature. In a few minds the contemplation of the sublime order of nature produces a reverential feeling, but to the great majority of mankind it is an incontestable though mournful fact that the discovery of controlling and unchanging law deprives phenomena of their moral significance, and nearly all the social and political spheres in which reverence was fostered have passed away. Its most beautiful displays are not in nations like the Americans or the modern French, who have thrown themselves most fully into the tendencies of the age, but rather in secluded regions like Styria or the Tyrol. Its artistic expression is found in no work of modern genius, but in the mediæval cathedral, which, mellowed but not impaired by time, still gazes on us in its deathless beauty through the centuries

of the past. A superstitious age, like every other phase of human history, has its distinctive virtues, which must necessarily decline before a new stage of progress can be attained.

The virtues and vices growing out of the relation between the sexes are difficult to treat in general terms, both on account of the obvious delicacy of the subject, and also because their natural history is extremely obscured by special causes. In the moral evolutions we have as yet examined, the normal influences are most powerful, and the importance of deranging and modifying circumstances is altogether subsidiary. The expansion of the amiable virtues, the decline of heroism and loyalty, and the growth of industrial habits spring out of changes which necessarily take place under almost all forms of civilisation,^{*} and the broad features of the movement are, therefore, in almost all nations substantially the same. But in the history of sensuality special causes, such as slavery, religious doctrines, or laws affecting marriage, have been the most powerful agents. The immense changes effected in this field by the Christian religion I shall hereafter examine. In the present chapter I shall content myself with two or three very general remarks relating to the nature of the vice, and to the effect of different stages of civilisation upon its progress.

There are, I conceive, few greater fallacies than are involved in the method, so popular among modern writers, of judging the immorality of a nation by its statistics of illegitimate births. Independently of the obvious defect of this method in excluding simple prostitution from our comparison, it altogether neglects the fact that a large number of illegitimate births arise from causes totally different from the great violence of the passions. Such, for example, is the notion prevailing in many country districts of England that the marriage ceremony has a retrospective virtue cancelling previous immorality; and such, too, is the custom so general among some classes on the Continent of forming permanent connections without the sanction either of a legal or a religious ceremony. However deeply such facts may be reprehended and deplored, it would be obviously absurd to

^{*} The principal exception being where slavery, co-existing with advanced civilisation, retards or prevents the growth of industrial habits.

infer from them that the nations in which they are most prominent are most conspicuous for the uncontrolled violence of their sensual passions. In Sweden, which long ranked among the lowest in the moral scale if measured by the number of illegitimate births, the chief cause appears to have been the difficulties with which legislators surrounded marriage.* Even in displays of actual and violent passion there are distinctions to be drawn which statistics are wholly unable to reach. The coarse, cynical, and ostentatious sensuality which forms the most repulsive feature of the French character; the dreamy, languid, and æsthetical sensuality of the Spaniard or the Italian; the furtive and retiring sensuality of some northern nations, though all forms of the same vice, are widely different feelings, and exercise widely different effects upon the prevailing disposition.

In addition to the very important influence upon public morals which climate, I think, undoubtedly exercises in stimulating or allaying the passions, it has a powerful indirect action upon the position, character, and tastes of women by determining the prevalence of indoor or out-of-door life, and also the classes among whom the gift of beauty is diffused. In northern countries the prevailing cast of beauty depends rather on colour than on form. It consists chiefly of a freshness and delicacy of complexion which severe labour and constant exposure necessarily destroy, and which is, therefore, rarely found in the highest perfection among the very poor. But the southern type is essentially democratic. The fierce rays of the sun only mellow and mature its charms. Its most perfect examples may be found in the hovel as in the palace, and the effects of this diffusion of beauty may be traced both in the manners and the morals of the people.

It is probable that the observance of this form of virtue is naturally most strict in a rude and semi-civilised but not barbarous people, and that a very refined civilisation is not often favourable to its growth. Sensuality is the vice of young men and of old nations. A languid epicureanism is the normal condition of nations which have attained a high intellectual or social civilisation, but which, through political causes, have no adequate sphere for the exertion of their energies.

* See Mr. Laing's *Travels in Sweden*. A similar cause is said to have had a similar effect in Bavaria.

The temptation arising from the great wealth of some, and from the feverish longing for luxury and exciting pleasures in others, which exists in all large towns, has been peculiarly fatal to female virtue, and the whole tendency of the public amusements of civilisation is in the same direction. The rude combats which form the chief enjoyments of barbarians produce cruelty. The dramatic and artistic tastes and the social habits of refined men produce sensuality. Education raises many poor women to a stage of refinement that makes them suitable companions for men of a higher rank, and not suitable for those of their own. Industrial pursuits have, indeed, a favourable influence in promoting habits of self-restraint and especially in checking the licence of military life; but, on the other hand, they greatly increase temptation by encouraging postponement of marriage, and in communities, even more than in individuals, moral inequalities are much more due to differences of temptation than to differences of self-restraint. In large bodies of men a considerable increase of temptation always brings with it an increase, though not necessarily a proportionate increase, of vice. Among the checks on excessive multiplication the historical influence of voluntary continence has been, it must be feared, very small. Physical and moral evils have alone been decisive, and, as these form the two opposite weights, we unhappily very frequently find that the diminution of the one has been followed by the increase of the other. The nearly universal custom of early marriages among the Irish peasantry has alone rendered possible that high standard of female chastity, that intense and jealous sensitiveness respecting female honour, for which, among many failings and some vices, the Irish poor have long been pre-eminent in Europe; but these very marriages are the most conspicuous proofs of the national improvidence, and one of the most fatal obstacles to industrial prosperity. Had the Irish peasants been less chaste, they would have been more prosperous. Had that fearful famine, which in the present [nineteenth] century desolated the land, fallen upon a people who thought more of accumulating subsistence than of avoiding sin, multitudes might now be living who perished by literal starvation on the dreary hills of Limerick or Skibbereen.

The example of Ireland furnishes us, however, with a remarkable instance of the manner in which the influence of a moral feeling may act beyond the circumstances that gave it birth. There is no fact in Irish history more singular than the complete and, I believe, unparalleled absence among the Irish priesthood of those moral scandals which in every continental country occasionally prove the danger of vows of celibacy. The unsuspected purity of the Irish priests in this respect is the more remarkable because, the government of the country being Protestant, there is no special inquisitorial legislation to ensure it, because of the almost unbounded influence of the clergy over their parishioners, and also because if any just cause of suspicion existed, in the fierce sectarianism of Irish public opinion it would assuredly be magnified. Considerations of climate are quite inadequate to explain this fact; but the chief cause is, I think, sufficiently obvious. The habit of marrying at the first development of the passions has produced among the Irish peasantry, from whom the priests for the most part spring, an extremely strong feeling of the iniquity of irregular sexual indulgence, which retains its power even over those who are bound to perpetual celibacy.

It will appear evident from the foregoing considerations that, while the essential nature of virtue and vice is unaltered, there is a perpetual, and in some branches an orderly and necessary change, as society advances, both in the proportionate value attached to different virtues in theory, and in the perfection in which they are realised in practice. It will appear, too, that, while there may be in societies such a thing as moral improvement, there is rarely or never, on a large scale, such a thing as unmixed improvement. We may gain more than we lose, but we always lose something. There are virtues which are continually dying away with advancing civilisation, and even the lowest stage possesses its distinctive excellence. There is no spectacle more piteous or more horrible to a good man than that of an oppressed nationality writhing in anguish beneath a tyrant's yoke; but there is no condition in which passionate, unquestioning self-sacrifice and heroic courage and the true sentiment of fraternity are more grandly elicited, and it is probable that the triumph of liberty will in these forms

not only lessen the moral performances, but even weaken the moral capacities of mankind. War is, no doubt, a fearful evil, but it is the seed-plot of magnanimous virtues, which in a pacific age must wither and decay. Even the gambling-table fosters among its more skilful votaries a kind of moral nerve, a capacity for bearing losses with calmness, and controlling the force of the desires, which is scarcely exhibited in equal perfection in any other sphere.

There is still so great a diversity of civilisation in existing nations that traversing tracts of space is almost like traversing tracts of time, for it brings us in contact with living representatives of nearly every phase of past civilisation. But these differences are rapidly disappearing before the unparalleled diffusion and simplification of knowledge, the still more amazing progress in means of locomotion, and the political and military causes that are manifestly converting Europe into a federation of vast centralised and democratic States. Even to those who believe that the leading changes are on the whole beneficial there is much that is melancholy in this revolution. Those small States which will soon have disappeared from the map of Europe, besides their vast superiority to most great empires in financial prosperity, in the material well-being of the inhabitants, and in many cases in political liberty, pacific tastes, and intellectual progress, form one of the chief refuges of that spirit of content, repose, and retrospective reverence which is pre-eminently wanting in modern civilisation, and their security is in every age one of the least equivocal measures of international morality. The monastic system, however pernicious when enlarged to excess, has undoubtedly contributed to the happiness of the world by supplying an asylum especially suited to a certain type of character; and that vindictive and short-sighted revolution which is extirpating it from Europe is destroying one of the best correctives of the excessive industrialism of our age. It is for the advantage of a nation that it should attain the most advanced existing type of progress, but it is extremely questionable whether it is for the advantage of the community at large that all nations should attain the same type, even when it is the most advanced. The influence of very various circumstances is absolutely necessary to perfect moral

development. Hence one of the great political advantages of class representation, which brings within the range of politics a far greater variety both of capacities and moral qualities than can be exhibited when one class has an exclusive or overwhelmingly preponderating influence, and also of heterogeneous empires, in which different degrees of civilisation produce different kinds of excellence which react upon and complete one another. In the rude work of India and Australia a type of character is formed which England could ill afford to lose.

The remarks I have now made will be sufficient, I hope, to throw some light upon those great questions concerning the relations of intellectual and moral progress which have of late years attracted so large an amount of attention. It has been contended that the historian of human progress should concentrate his attention exclusively on the intellectual elements; for there is no such thing as moral history, morals being essentially stationary, and the rudest barbarians being in this respect as far advanced as ourselves. In opposition to this view I have maintained that, while what may be termed the primal elements of morals are unaltered, there is a perpetual change in the standard which is exacted, and also in the relative value attached to particular virtues, and that these changes constitute one of the most important branches of general history. It has been contended by other writers that, although such changes do take place, and although they play an extremely great part in the world, they must be looked upon as the result of intellectual causes, changes in knowledge producing changes in morals. In this view, as we have seen, there is some truth, but it can only, I think, be accepted with great qualification. It is one of the plainest of facts that neither the individuals nor the ages most distinguished for intellectual achievements have been most distinguished for moral excellence, and that a high intellectual and material civilisation has often co-existed with much depravity. In some respects the conditions of intellectual growth are not favourable to moral growth. The agglomeration of men in great cities—which are always the centres of progress and enlightenment—is one of the most important causes of material and intellectual advance; but great towns are the

peculiar seed-plots of vice, and it is extremely questionable whether they produce any special and equivalent efflorescence of virtue, for even the social virtues are probably more cultivated in small populations, where men live in more intimate relations. Many of the most splendid outbursts of moral enthusiasm may be traced to an overwhelming force of conviction rarely found in very cultivated minds, which are keenly sensible to possibilities of error, conflicting arguments, and qualifying circumstances. Civilisation has, on the whole, been more successful in repressing crime than in repressing vice. It is very favourable to the gentler, charitable, and social virtues, and, where slavery does not exist, to the industrial virtues, and it is the especial nurse of the intellectual virtues; but it is in general not equally favourable to the production of self-sacrifice, enthusiasm, reverence, or chastity.

The moral changes, however, which are effected by civilisation may ultimately be ascribed chiefly to intellectual causes, for these lie at the root of the whole structure of civilised life. Sometimes, as we have seen, intellectual causes act directly, but more frequently they have only an indirect influence, producing habits of life which in their turn produce new conceptions of duty. The morals of men are more governed by their pursuits than by their opinions. A type of virtue is first formed by circumstances, and men afterwards make it the model upon which their theories are framed. Thus geographical or other circumstances, that make one nation military and another industrial, will produce in each a realised type of excellence, and corresponding conceptions about the relative importance of different virtues, widely different from those which are produced in the other; and this may be the case although the amount of knowledge in the two communities is substantially equal.

Having discussed these questions as fully as the nature of my subject requires, I will conclude this chapter by noticing a few very prevalent errors in the moral judgments of history, and will also endeavour to elucidate some important consequences that may be deduced from the nature of moral types.

It is probable that the moral standard of most men is much lower in political judgments than in private matters in which their own interests are concerned.

There is nothing more common than for men who in private life are models of the most scrupulous integrity to justify or excuse the most flagrant acts of political dishonesty and violence; and we should be altogether mistaken if we argued rigidly from such approvals to the general moral sentiments of those who utter them. Not unfrequently, too, by a curious moral paradox, political crimes are closely connected with national virtues. A people who are submissive, gentle, and loyal, fall by reason of these very qualities under a despotic government; but this uncontrolled power has never failed to exercise a most pernicious influence on rulers, and, their numerous acts of rapacity and aggression being attributed in history to the nation they represent, the national character is wholly misinterpreted.¹ There are also particular kinds both of virtue and of vice which appear prominently before the world, while others of at least equal influence almost escape the notice of history. Thus, for example, the sectarian animosities, the horrible persecutions, the blind hatred of progress, the ungenerous support of every galling disqualification and restraint, the intense class selfishness, the obstinately protracted defence of intellectual and political superstition, the childish but whimsically ferocious quarrels about minute dogmatic distinctions, or dresses, or candlesticks, which constitute together the main features of ecclesiastical history, might naturally, though very unjustly, lead men to place the ecclesiastical type in almost the lowest rank, both intellectually and morally. These are, in fact, the displays of ecclesiastical influence which stand in bold relief in the pages of history. The civilising and moralising influence of the clergyman in his parish; the simple, unostentatious, unselfish zeal with which he educates the ignorant, guides the erring, comforts the sorrowing, braves the horrors of pestilence, and sheds a hallowing influence over the dying hour; the countless ways in which, in his little sphere, he allays evil passions, and softens manners, and elevates and purifies those around him—all these things, though very evident to the detailed observer, do not stand out in the same vivid prominence in historical records, and are continually forgotten by historians. It is

always hazardous to argue from the character of a corporation to the character of the members who compose it, but in no other case is this method of judgment so fallacious as in the history of ecclesiastics, for there is no other class whose distinctive excellences are less apparent, and whose mental and moral defects are more glaringly conspicuous in corporate action. In different nations, again, the motives of virtue are widely different, and serious misconceptions arise from the application to one nation of the measure of another. Thus the chief national virtues of the French people result from an intense power of sympathy, which is also the foundation of some of their most beautiful intellectual qualities, of their social habits, and of their unrivalled influence in Europe. No other nation has so habitual and vivid a sympathy with great struggles for freedom beyond its border. No other literature exhibits so expansive and oecumenical a genius, or expounds so skilfully, or appreciates so generously, foreign ideas. In hardly any other land would a disinterested war for the support of a suffering nationality find so large an amount of support. The national crimes of France are many and grievous, but much will be forgiven her because she loved much. The Anglo-Saxon nations, on the other hand, though sometimes roused to strong but transient enthusiasm, are habitually singularly narrow, unappreciative, and unsympathetic. The great source of their national virtue is the sense of duty, the power of pursuing a course which they believe to be right, independently of all considerations of sympathy or favour, of enthusiasm or success. Other nations have far surpassed them in many qualities that are beautiful, and in some qualities that are great. It is the merit of the Anglo-Saxon race that beyond all others it has produced men of the stamp of a Washington or a Hampden; men careless, indeed, for glory, but very careful of honour; who made the supreme majesty of moral rectitude the guiding principle of their lives, who proved in the most trying circumstances that no allurements of ambition, and no storms of passion, could cause them to deviate one hair's breadth from the cause they believed to be their duty. This was also a Roman characteristic—especially that of Marcus Aurelius. The unwearied, unostentatious, and inglorious crusade of England

¹ This has been, I think, especially the case with the Austrians

against slavery may probably be regarded as among the three or four perfectly virtuous pages comprised in the history of nations.

Although it cannot be said that any virtue is the negation of another, it is undoubtedly true that virtues are naturally grouped according to principles of affinity or congruity, which are essential to the unity of the type. The heroic, the amiable, the industrial, the intellectual virtues form in this manner distinct groups; and in some cases the development of one group is incompatible, not indeed with the existence, but with the prominence of others. Content cannot be the leading virtue in a society animated by an intense industrial spirit, nor submission nor tolerance of injuries in a society formed upon a military type, nor intellectual virtues in a society where a believing spirit is made the essential of goodness; yet each of these conditions is the special sphere of some particular class of virtues. The distinctive beauty of a moral type depends not so much on the elements of which it is composed as on the proportions in which those elements are combined. The characters of Socrates, of Cato, of Bayard, of Fénelon, and of St. Francis are all beautiful, but they differ generically, and not simply in degrees of excellence. To endeavour to impart to Cato the distinctive charm of St. Francis, or to St. Francis that of Cato, would be as absurd as to endeavour to unite in a single statue the beauties of the Apollo and the Laocoon, or in a single landscape the beauties of the twilight and of the meridian sun. Take away pride from the ancient Stoic or the modern Englishman, and you would have destroyed the basis of many of his noblest virtues; but humility was the very principle and root of the moral qualities of the monk. There is no quality virtuous in a woman that is not also virtuous in a man, yet that disposition or hierarchy of virtues which constitutes a perfect woman would be wholly unsuited for a perfect man. The moral is in this respect like the physical type. The beauty of man is not the beauty of woman, nor the beauty of the child as the beauty of the adult, nor the beauty of an Italian as the beauty of an Englishwoman. All types of character are not good, as all types of countenance are not beautiful; but there are many distinct casts of goodness, as there are many distinct casts of beauty.

This most important truth may be stated in a somewhat different form. Whenever a man is eminently deficient in any virtue it, of course, follows that his character is imperfect, but it does not necessarily follow that he is not in other respects moral and virtuous. There is, however, usually some one virtue, which I may term rudimentary, which is brought forward so prominently before the world, as the first condition of moral excellence, that it may be safely inferred that a man who has absolutely neglected it is entirely indifferent to moral culture. Rudimentary virtues vary in different ages, nations, and classes. Thus, in the great republics of antiquity patriotism was rudimentary, for it was so assiduously cultivated that it appeared at once the most obvious and the most essential of duties. Among ourselves much private virtue may co-exist with complete indifference to national interests. In the monastic period, and in a somewhat different form in the age of chivalry, a spirit of reverential obedience was rudimentary, and the basis of all moral progress; but we may now frequently find a good man without it, his moral energies having been cultivated in other directions. Common truthfulness and honesty, as I have already said, are rudimentary virtues in industrial societies, but not in others. Chastity, in England at least, is a rudimentary female virtue, but scarcely a rudimentary virtue among men, and it has not been in all ages, and is not now in all countries, rudimentary among women. There is no more important task devolving upon a moral historian than to discover in each period the rudimentary virtue, for it regulates in a great degree the position assigned to all others.

From the considerations I have urged it will appear that there is considerable danger in proposing too absolutely a single character, however admirable, as the model to which all men must necessarily conform. A character may be perfect in its own kind, but no character can possibly embrace all types of perfection; for, as we have seen, the perfection of a type depends not only upon the virtues that constitute it, but also upon the order and prominence assigned to them. All that can be expected in an ideal is that it should be perfect of its own kind, and should exhibit the type most needed in its age, and most widely useful

to mankind. The Christian type is the glorification of the amiable, as the Stoic type was that of the heroic, qualities; and this is one of the reasons why Christianity is so much more fitted than Stoicism to preside over civilisation, for the more society is organised and civilised the greater is the scope for the amiable, and the less for the heroic, qualities.

The history of that moral intolerance which endeavours to reduce all characters to a single type has never, I think, been examined as it deserves, and I shall frequently have occasion to advert to it in the following pages. No one can have failed to observe how common it is for men to make their own tastes or excellences the measure of all goodness, pronouncing all that is broadly different from them to be imperfect, or low, or of a secondary value. And this, which is usually attributed to vanity, is probably in most cases much more due to feebleness of imagination, to the difficulty most men have in conceiving in their minds an order of character fundamentally different from their own. A good man can usually sympathise much more with a very imperfect character of his own type than with a far more perfect one of a different type. To this cause, quite as much as to historical causes or occasional divergences of interest, may be traced the extreme difficulty of effecting cordial international friendships, especially in those cases when a difference of race coincides with the difference of nationality. Each nation has a distinct type of excellence; each esteems the virtues in which it excels, and in which its neighbours are often most deficient, incomparably the greatest. Each regards with especial antipathy the vices from which it is most free, and to which its neighbours may be most addicted. Hence arises a mingled feeling of contempt and dislike, from which the more enlightened minds are, indeed, soon emancipated, but which constitutes the popular sentiment.

The type of character of every individual depends partly upon innate temperament and partly upon external circumstances. A warlike, a refined, an industrial society, each evokes and requires its specific qualities, and produces its appropriate type. If a man of a different type arise—if, for example, a man formed by nature to exhibit to the highest perfection the virtues of gentleness or meekness, be born in the midst of a

fierce military society—he will find no suitable scope for action; he will jar with his age, and his type will be regarded with disfavour. And the effect of this opposition is not simply that he will not be appreciated as he deserves, he will also never succeed in developing his own distinctive virtues as they would have been developed under other circumstances. Everything will be against him—the force of education, the habits of society, the opinions of mankind, even his own sense of duty. All the highest models of excellence about him being formed on a different type, his very efforts to improve his being will dull the qualities in which nature intended him to excel. If, on the other hand, a man with naturally heroic qualities be born in a society which pre-eminently values heroism, he will not only be more appreciated, he will also, under the concurrence of favourable circumstances, carry his heroism to a far higher point than would otherwise have been possible. Hence changing circumstances produce changing types, and hence, too, the possibility of moral history and the necessity of uniting it with general history. Religions, considered as moral teachers, are realised and effective only when their moral teaching is in conformity with the tendency of their age. If any part of it is not so, that part will be either openly abandoned, or refined away, or tacitly neglected. Among the ancients the co-existence of the Epicurean and Stoical schools, which offered to the world two entirely different archetypes of virtue, secured in a very remarkable manner the recognition of different kinds of excellence; for, although each of these schools often attained a pre-eminence, neither ever succeeded in wholly destroying or discrediting the other.

Of the two elements that compose the moral condition of mankind our generalised knowledge is almost restricted to one. We know much of the ways in which political, social, or intellectual causes act upon character, but scarcely anything of the laws that govern innate disposition, of the reason and extent of the natural moral diversities of individuals or races. I think, however, that most persons who reflect upon the subject will conclude that the progress of medicine, revealing the physical causes of different moral predispositions, is likely to place a very large measure of knowledge on this point within our reach. Of all the great

branches of human knowledge, medicine is that in which the accomplished results are most obviously imperfect and provisional, in which the field of unrealised possibilities is most extensive, and from which, if the human mind were directed to it, as it has been during the past century to locomotive and other industrial inventions, the most splendid results might be expected. Our almost absolute ignorance of the causes of some of the most fatal diseases, and the empirical nature of nearly all our best medical treatment, have been often recognised. The medicine of inhalation is still in its infancy, and yet it is by inhalation that Nature produces most of her diseases and effects most of her cures. The medical power of electricity, which of all known agencies bears most resemblance to life, is almost unexplored. The discovery of anæsthetics has in our own day opened out a field of inestimable importance, and the proved possibility, under certain physical conditions, of governing by external suggestions the whole current of the feelings and emotions, may possibly contribute yet further to the alleviation of suffering, and perhaps to that euthanasia which Bacon proposed to physicians as an end of their art. But in the eyes both of the philanthropist and of the philosopher the greatest of all results to be expected in this, or perhaps any other, field are, I conceive, to be looked for in the study of the relations between our physical and our moral natures. He who raises moral pathology to a science—expanding, systematising, and applying many fragmentary observations that have been already made—will probably take a place among the master intellects of mankind. The fastings and bleedings of the mediæval monk, the medicines for allaying or stimulating the sensual passions, the treatment of nervous diseases, the moral influences of insanity and of castration, the researches of phrenology, the moral changes that accompany the successive stages of physical development, the instances of

diseases which have altered, sometimes permanently, the whole complexion of the character, and have acted through the character upon all the intellectual judgments,* are examples of the kind of facts with which such a science would deal. Mind and body are so closely connected that even those who most earnestly protest against materialism readily admit that each acts continually upon the other. The sudden emotion that quickens the pulse and blanches or flushes the cheek, and the effect of fear in predisposing to an epidemic, are familiar instances of the action of the mind upon the body, and the more powerful and permanent influence of the body upon the disposition is attested by countless observations. It is probable that this action extends to all parts of our moral constitution; that every passion or characteristic tendency has a physical predisposing cause; and that, if we were acquainted with these, we might treat by medicine the many varieties of moral disease as systematically as we now treat physical disease. In addition to its incalculable practical importance, such knowledge would have a great philosophical value, throwing a new light upon the filiation of our moral qualities, enabling us to treat exhaustively the moral influence of climate, and withdrawing the great question of the influence of race from the impressions of isolated observers to place it on the firm basis of experiment. It would thus form the complement to the labours of the historian.

Such discoveries are, however, perhaps far from attainment, and their discussion does not fall within the compass of this work. My present object is simply to trace the action of external circumstances upon morals, to examine what have been the moral types proposed as ideal in different ages, in what degree they have been realised in practice, and by what causes they have been modified, impaired, or destroyed.

* See some remarkable instances of this in Cabanis, *Rapports du Physique et du Moral de l'Homme*

CHAPTER II.

THE PAGAN EMPIRE

ONE of the first facts that must strike a student who examines the ethical teaching of the ancient civilisations is how imperfectly that teaching was represented, and how feebly it was influenced, by the popular creed. The moral ideas had at no time been sought in the actions of the gods, and long before the triumph of Christianity polytheism had ceased to have any great influence upon the more cultivated intellects of mankind.

In Greece we may trace from the earliest time the footsteps of a religion of nature, wholly different from the legends of the mythology. The language in which the first Greek dramatists asserted the supreme authority and universal providence of Zeus was so emphatic that the Christian Fathers commonly attributed it either to direct inspiration or to a knowledge of the Jewish writings, while later theologians of the school of Cudworth have argued from it in favour of the original monotheism of our race. The philosophers were always either contemptuous or hostile to the prevailing legends. Pythagoras is said to have declared that he had seen Hesiod tied to a brazen pillar in hell, and Homer hung upon a tree surrounded by serpents, on account of the fables they had invented about the gods.¹ Plato, for the same reason, banished the poets from his republic. Stilpo turned to ridicule the whole system of sacrifices,² and was exiled from Athens for denying that the Athene of Phidias was a goddess.³ Xenophanes remarked that each nation attributed to the gods its distinctive national type, the gods of the Æthiopians being black, the gods of the Thracians fair and blue-eyed.⁴ Diagoras and Theodorus are said to have denied, and Protagoras to have questioned, the existence of the gods,⁵ while the Epicureans

deemed them wholly indifferent to human affairs, and the Pyrrhonists pronounced our faculties absolutely incapable of attaining any sure knowledge, either human or divine. The Cynic Antisthenes said that there were many popular gods, but there was only one god of nature.¹ The Stoics, reproducing an opinion which was supported by Aristotle and attributed to Pythagoras,² believed in an all-pervading soul of nature, but, unlike some modern schools which have adopted this view, they asserted in emphatic language the doctrine of Providence and the self-consciousness of the Deity.

In the Roman Republic and Empire a general scepticism had likewise arisen among the philosophers as the first fruit of intellectual development, and the educated classes were speedily divided between avowed or virtual atheists, like the Epicureans,³ and pure theists, like the Stoics and the Platonists. The first, represented by such writers as Lucretius and Petronius, regarded the gods simply as the creations of fear, denied every form of providence, attributed the world to a concurrence of atoms, and life to spontaneous generation, and regarded it as the chief end of philosophy to banish as illusions of the imagination every form of religious belief. The others formed a more or less pantheistic conception of the Deity, asserted the existence of a providence,⁴ but treated with great contempt

¹ Lactant. *Inst. Div.* i. 5.

² "Pythagoras ita definivit quid esset Deus: Animus qui per universas mundi partes, omnemque naturam commeanz atque diffusus, ex quo omnia quæ nascuntur animalia vitam capiunt" (*Id.*) Lactantius in this chapter has collected several other philosophic definitions of the Divinity. See too Plutarch, *De Placit. Philos.* Tertullian explains the Stoical theory by an ingenious illustration: "Stoici enim volunt Deum sic per materiem decurrere quomodo mel per favos." (*Tert. De Anima.*)

³ As Cicero says: "Epicurus re tollit, oratione reliquit, deos." (*De Nat. Deor.* i. 44.)

⁴ Sometimes, however, they restricted its operation to the great events of life. As an interlocutor in Cicero says: "Magna dii curant, parva negligunt." (*Cic. De Nat. Deor.* ii. 66.) Justin Martyr notices (*Trypho*, i.) that some philosophers maintained that

¹ Diog. Laërt. *Pythag.*

² Plutarch, *De Profectibus in Virt.*

³ Diog. Laërt. *Stilpo.*

⁴ Clem. Alexand. *Strom.* vii.

⁵ Cicero, *De Nat. Deorum*, i. 1.

the prevailing legends, which they endeavoured in various ways to explain. The first systematic theory of explanation appears to have been that of the Sicilian Euhemerus, whose work was translated by Ennius. He pretended that the gods were originally kings, whose history and genealogies he professed to trace, and who after death had been deified by mankind.¹ Another attempt, which in the first period of Roman scepticism was more generally popular, was that of some of the Stoics, who regarded the gods as personifications of the different attributes of the Deity, or of different forces of nature. Thus Neptune was the sea, Pluto was fire, Hercules represented the strength of God, Minerva His wisdom, Ceres His fertilising energy.² More than a hundred years before the Empire, Varro had declared that "the soul of the world is God, and that its parts are true divinities."³ Virgil and Manilius described, in lines of singular beauty, that universal spirit, the principle of all life, the efficient cause of all motion, which permeates and animates the globe. Pliny said that "the world and sky, in whose embrace all things are enclosed, must be deemed a god, eternal, immense, never begotten, and never to perish. To seek things beyond this is of no profit to man, and they transcend the limits of his faculties."⁴ Cicero had adopted the higher Platonic conception of the Deity as mind freed from all taint of matter,⁵ while Seneca celebrated in magnificent language "Jupiter the guardian and ruler of the universe, the soul and spirit, the lord and master of this mundane spherethe cause of causes, upon whom all things hang.....Whose wisdom oversees the world that it may move uncontrolled

in its course.....from whom all things proceed, by whose spirit we live.....who comprises all we see."⁶ Lucan, the great poet of Stoicism, rose to a still higher strain, and to one which still more accurately expressed the sentiments of his school, when he described Jupiter as that majestic, all-pervasive spirit, whose throne is virtue and the universe.⁷ Quintilian defended the subjugation of the world beneath the sceptre of a single man, on the ground that it was an image of the government of God. Other philosophers contented themselves with asserting the supreme authority of Jupiter Maximus, and reducing the other divinities to mere administrative and angelic functions, or, as the Platonists expressed it, to the position of *dæmons*. According to some of the Stoics, a final catastrophe would consume the universe, the resuscitated spirits of men and all these minor gods, and the whole creation being absorbed into the great parent spirit, God would be all in all. The very children and old women ridiculed Cerberus and the Furies,⁸ or treated them as mere metaphors of conscience.⁹ In the deism of Cicero the popular divinities were discarded, the oracles refuted and ridiculed, the whole system of divination pronounced a political imposture, and the genesis of the miraculous traced to the exuberance of the imagination and to certain diseases of the judgment.¹⁰ Before the time of Constantine numerous books had been written against the oracles.¹¹ The greater number of these had actually ceased, and the ablest writers justly saw in this cessation an evidence of the declining credulity of the people, and a proof that the oracles had been a fruit of that credulity.¹² The

God cared for the universal or species, but not for the individual. Seneca maintains that the Divinity has determined all things by an inexorable law of destiny, which He has decreed, but which He Himself obeys. (*De Provident* v.)

¹ See on this theory Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.* i. 42; Lactantius, *Inst. Div.* i. 11.

² Diog. Laert. *Vit. Zeno*. St. Aug. *De Civ. Dei*, iv. 11. Maximus of Tyre, *Diaseis*, x. (in some editions xxix.) § 8. Seneca, *De Beneficiis*, iv. 7-8. Cic. *De Nat. Deor.* i. 15. Cicero has devoted the first two books of this work to the Stoical theology. A full review of the allegorical and mythical interpretations of paganism is given by Eusebius, *Evangel. Præpar.* lib. iii.

³ St. Aug. *De Civ. Dei* vii. 5.

⁴ Plin. *Hist. Nat.* ii. 1.

⁵ "Nec vero Deus ipse qui intelligitur a nobis, alio modo intelligi potest nisi mens soluta quædam et libera, segregata ab omni concretionem mortali, omnia sentiens et movens, ipsaque prædita motu sempiterno." (*Tusc. Quæst.* i. 27.)

⁶ Senec. *Quæst. Nat.* ii. 45.

⁷ "Estne Dei sedes, nisi terra et pontus et æther, Et cælum et virtus? Superos quid quærimus ultra? Jupiter est quodcumque vides, quodcumque movens." —Pharsal, ix. 578-82.

⁸ "Quæve anus tam excors inveniri potest, quæ illa, quæ quondam credebantur apud inferos portenta, extimescat?" (Cic. *De Nat. Deor.* ii. 2.)

⁹ "Esse aliquos Manes et subterranea regna Nec pueri credunt nisi qui nondum cere lavantur." —Juv. *Sat.* ii. 149, 152.

See on this subject a good review by the Abbé Freppel, *Les Pères Apostoliques*, leçon viii.

¹⁰ Cicero, *De Leg.* i. 14; Macrobius, *In Som. Scip.* i. 10.

¹¹ See his works *De Divinatione* and *De Nat. Deorum*, which form a curious contrast to the religious conservatism of the *De Legibus*, which was written chiefly from a political point of view.

¹² Eusebius, *Præpar. Evangel.* lib. iv.

⁷ The oracles first gave their answers in verse, but their bad poetry was ridiculed, and they gradually sank to prose, and at last ceased. Plutarch defended the inspiration of the bad poetry on the ground that the inspiring spirit availed itself of the natural faculties

Stoics, holding, as was their custom, aloof from direct religious discussion, dissuaded their disciples from consulting them, on the ground that the gifts of fortune were of no account, and that a good man should be content with his conscience, making duty, and not success, the object of his life.² Cato wondered that two augurs could meet with gravity.³ The Roman general Sertorius made the forgery of auspicious omens a continual resource in warfare.⁴ The Roman wits made divination the favourite subject of their ridicule.⁵ The denunciation which the early Greek moralists launched against the popular ascription of immoral deeds to the gods was echoed by a long series of later philosophers,⁶ while Ovid made these fables the theme of his mocking *Metamorphoses*, and in his most immoral poem proposed Jupiter as a model of vice. With an irony not unlike that of Isaiah, Horace described the carpenter deliberating whether he should convert a shapeless log into a bench or into a god.⁷ Cicero, Plutarch, Maximus of Tyre, and Dion Chrysostom either denounced idolatry or defended the use of images simply on the ground that they were signs and symbols of the Deity,⁸

well suited to aid the devotions of the ignorant. Seneca⁹ and the whole school of Pythagoras objected to the sacrifices.

These examples will be sufficient to show how widely the philosophic classes in Rome were removed from the professed religion of the State, and how necessary it is to seek elsewhere the sources of their moral life. But the opinions of learned men never reflect faithfully those of the vulgar, and the chasm between the two classes was even wider than at present¹⁰ before the dawn of Christianity and the invention of printing. The atheistic enthusiasm of Lucretius and the sceptical enthusiasm of some of the disciples of Carneades were isolated phenomena, and the great majority of the ancient philosophers, while speculating with the utmost freedom in private, or in writings that were read by the few, countenanced, practised, and even defended the religious rites that they despised. It was believed that many different paths adapted to different nations and grades of knowledge converge to the same Divinity, and that the most erroneous religion is good if it forms good dispositions and inspires virtuous actions. The oracle of Delphi had said that the best religion is that of a man's own city. Polybius and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who regarded all religions simply as political agencies, dilated in rapturous terms upon the devotion of the Romans and the comparative purity of their creed.¹¹ Varro openly professed the belief that there are religious truths which it is expedient that the people should not know, and falsehoods which they should believe to be true.¹² The Academic Cicero and the Epicurean Cæsar were both high officers of religion. The Stoics taught that every man should duly perform the religious ceremonies of his country.¹³

But the Roman religion, even in its best days, though an admirable system of moral discipline, was never an independent source of moral enthusiasm. It was the creature of the State, and derived its inspiration from political feeling. The Roman gods were not, like those of the

of the priestess for the expression of its infallible truths—a theory which is still much in vogue among Biblical critics, and is, I believe, called dynamical inspiration. See Fontenelle, *Hist. des Oracles* (1st ed.), pp. 292–293.

² See the famous description of Cato refusing to consult the oracle of Jupiter Ammon, in Lucan, *Phars. ix.*; and also Arrian, ii. 7. Seneca beautifully says: "Vis deos propitiare? bonus esto. Satis illos coluit quisquis imitatus est." (*Ep.* xcv.)

³ Cicero, *De Divin.* ii. 24.

⁴ Aulus Gellius, *Noct. Att.* xv. 22.

⁵ See a long string of witticisms collected by Legendre, *Traité de l'Opinion, ou Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de l'Esprit humain* (Venise, 1735), tome i. pp. 386–387.

⁶ See Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*; Seneca, *De Brev. Vit.* c. xvi.; Plin. *Hist. Nat.* ii. 5; Plutarch, *De Superstitione*.

⁷ "Olim truncus eram ficulnus, inutile lignum,

Cum faber, incertus scameum faceretne Prapum,
Maluit esse Deum." —*Sat.* I. viii. 1–3.

⁸ There is a very curious discussion on this subject, reported to have taken place between Apollonius of Tyana and an Egyptian priest. The former defended the Greek fashion of worshipping the Divinity under the form of the human image, sculptured by Phidias and Praxiteles, this being the noblest form we can conceive, and therefore the least inadequate to the Divine perfections. The latter defended the Egyptian custom of worshipping animals, because, as he said, it is blasphemous to attempt to conceive an image of the Deity, and the Egyptians therefore concentrate the imagination of the worshipper on objects that are plainly merely allegorical or symbolical, and do not pretend to offer any such image (*Philos. Apoll. of Tyana*, vi. 19). Pliny shortly says: "Effigiem Dei formamque quærerere imbecillitatis humanæ reor" (*Hist. Nat.* ii. 5). See too Max. Tyrius, *Diss.* xxxviii. There was a legend that Numa forbade all idols, and that for 200 years they were unknown in Rome (Plutarch, *Life*

of Numa). Dion Chrysostom said that the gods need no statues or sacrifices, but that by these means we attest our devotion to them (*Orat.* xxvi.). On the vanity of rich idols, see Plutarch, *De Superstitione*; Seneca, *Ep.* xxxi.

⁹ *Lact. Inst. Div.* vi. 25.

¹⁰ Dion. Halic. ii.; Polyb. vi. 55.

¹¹ St. Aug. *De Civ. Dei*, iv. 31.

¹² Epictetus, *Enchir.* xxxix.

Greeks, the creations of an unbridled and irreverent fancy, nor, like those of the Egyptians, representations of the forces of nature; they were for the most part simple allegories, frigid personifications of different virtues, or presiding spirits imagined for the protection of different departments of industry. The religion established the sanctity of an oath, it gave a kind of official consecration to certain virtues, and commemorated special instances in which they had been displayed; its local character strengthened patriotic feeling, its worship of the dead fostered a vague belief in the immortality of the soul,¹ it sustained the supremacy of the father in the family, surrounded marriage with many imposing solemnities, and created simple and reverent characters profoundly submissive to an over-ruling Providence and scrupulously observant of sacred rites. But with all this it was purely selfish. It was simply a method of obtaining prosperity, averting calamity, and reading the future. Ancient Rome produced many heroes, but no saint. Its self-sacrifice was patriotic, not religious. Its religion was neither an independent teacher nor a source of inspiration, although its rites mingled with and strengthened some of the best habits of the people.

But these habits, and the religious reverence with which they were connected, soon disappeared amid the immorality and decomposition that marked the closing years of the Republic and the dawn of the Empire. The stern simplicity of life, which the censors had so zealously and often so tyrannically enforced,² was exchanged for a luxury which first appeared after the return of the army of Manlius from Asia,³ increased to immense proportions after the almost simultaneous conquests of Carthage, Corinth, and Macedonia,⁴ received an additional stimulus from the example of Antony,⁵ and at last, under the Empire, rose to excesses which the wildest Orient-

tal orgies have never surpassed.¹ The complete subversion of the social and political system of the Republic, the anarchy of civil war, the ever-increasing concourse of strangers, bringing with them new philosophies, customs, and gods, had dissolved or effaced all the old bonds of virtue. The simple juxtaposition of many forms of worship effected what could not have been effected by the most sceptical literature or the most audacious philosophy. The moral influence of religion was almost annihilated. The feeling of reverence was almost extinct. Augustus solemnly degraded the statue of Neptune because his fleet had been wrecked.² When Germanicus died, the populace stoned or overthrew the altars of the gods.³ The idea of sanctity was so far removed from the popular divinities that it became a continual complaint that prayers were offered which the most depraved would blush to pronounce aloud.⁴ Amid the corruption of the Empire we meet with many noble efforts of reform made by philosophers or by emperors, but we find scarcely a trace of the moral influence of the old religion. The apotheosis of the emperors consummated its degradation. The foreign gods were identified with those of Rome, and all their immoral legends associated with the national creed.⁵ The theatre greatly extended the area of scepticism. Cicero mentions the assenting plaudits with which the people heard the lines of Ennius, declaring that the gods, though real beings, take no care for the things of man.⁶ Plutarch tells of a spectator at a theatre rising up with indignation after a recital of the crimes of Diana, and exclaiming to the actor, "May you have

¹ There is much curious information about the growth of Roman luxury in Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* lib. xxxiv). The movement of decomposition has been lately fully traced by Mommsen (*Hist. of Rome*); Dollinger (*Jew and Gentile*); Denis (*List. des Idées morales dans l'Antiquité*); Pressensé (*Hist. des trois premiers siècles*); in the histories of Champagny, and in the beautiful closing chapters of the *Apôtres* of Renan.

² Sueton. *Aug.* xvi.

³ *Ibid.* *Calig.* v.

⁴ Persius, *Sat.* ii.; Horace, *Ep.* i. 16, 17 57-60

⁵ See on the identification of the Greek and Egyptian myths, Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*. The Greek and Roman gods were habitually regarded as identical, and Cæsar and Tacitus, in like manner, identified the deities of Gaul and Germany with those of their own country. See Dollinger, *Jew and Gentile*, vol. ii. pp. 160-165.

⁶ "Ego deum genus esse semper dixi et dicam cultum;
Sed eos non curare opinor quid agat hominum genus."

Cicero adds. "Magno plausu loquitur assentiente populo." (*De Divin.* ii. 50.)

¹ Livy, xxxix. 6.

² Vell. Paternulus, i. 11-13; Eutropius, iv. 6. Sallust ascribed the decadence of Rome to the destruction of its rival, Carthage.

³ Plutarch, *De Adulatore et Amico*.

a daughter like her whom you have described!"¹ St. Augustine and other of the Fathers long after ridiculed the pagans who satirised in the theatres the very gods they worshipped in the temples.² Men were still profoundly superstitious, but they resorted to each new religion as to a charm or talisman of especial power, or a system of magic revealing the future. There existed, too, to a very large extent, a kind of superstitious scepticism, which occupies a very prominent place in religious history. There were multitudes who, declaring that there were no gods, or that the gods never interfered with human affairs, professed with the same breath an absolute faith in all portents, auguries, dreams, and miracles. Innumerable natural objects, such as comets, meteors, earthquakes, or monstrous births, were supposed to possess a kind of occult or magical virtue, by which they foreshadowed, and in some cases influenced, the destinies of men. Astrology, which is the special representative of this mode of thought, rose to great prominence. The elder Pliny notices that in his time a belief was rapidly gaining ground, both among the learned and among the vulgar, that the whole destiny of a man is determined by the star that presides over his nativity; that God, having ordained this, never interferes with human affairs, and that the reality of the portents is due to this pre-ordination.³ One of the later historians of the Empire remarks that numbers who denied the existence of any divinity believed, nevertheless, that they could not safely appear in public, or eat or bathe, unless they had first carefully consulted the almanac to ascertain the position of the planet Mercury, or how far the moon was from the Crab.⁴ Except, perhaps, among

the peasants in the country districts, the Roman religion, in the last years of the Republic, and in the first century of the Empire, scarcely existed except in the state of a superstition, and he who would examine the true moral influence of the time must turn to the great schools of philosophy which had been imported from Greece.

The vast place which the rival systems of Zeno and Epicurus occupy in the moral history of mankind, and especially in the closing years of the empire of paganism, may easily lead us to exaggerate the creative genius of their founders, who, in fact, did little more than give definitions or intellectual expression to types of excellence that had at all times existed in the world. There have ever been stern, upright, self-controlled, and courageous men, actuated by a pure sense of duty, capable of high efforts of self-sacrifice, somewhat intolerant of the frailties of others, somewhat hard and unsympathising in the ordinary intercourse of society, but rising to heroic grandeur as the storm lowered upon their path, and more ready to relinquish life than the cause they believed to be true. There have also always been men of easy tempers and of amiable disposition, gentle, benevolent, and pliant, cordial friends and forgiving enemies, selfish at heart, yet ever ready, when it is possible, to unite their gratifications with those of others; averse to all enthusiasm, mysticism, utopias, and superstition, with little depth of character or capacity for self-sacrifice, but admirably fitted to impart and to receive enjoyment, and to render the course of life easy and harmonious. The first are by nature Stoics, and the second Epicureans; and if they proceed to reason about the *summum bonum* or the affections, it is more than probable that in each case their characters will determine their theories. The first will estimate self-control above all other qualities, will disparage the affections, and will endeavour to separate widely the ideas of duty and of interest, while the second will systematically prefer the amiable to the heroic, and the utilitarian to the mystical.

But while it is undoubtedly true that in these matters character usually determines opinion, it is not less true that character is itself in a great measure governed by national circumstances. The refined, artistic, sensual civilisations of

¹ Plutarch, *De Superstitione*.

² St. Aug. *De Civ. Dei*, vi. 6; Tertul. *Apol.* 15; Arnobius, *Adv. Gentes*, iv.

³ "Pars alia et hanc pellet, astroque suo eventus assignat. Nascenti legibus; semelque in omnes futuros unquam Deo decretum; in reliquum vero otium datum. Sedere cepit sententia hæc pariterque et eruditum vulgus et rude in eam cursu vadit. Ecce fulgurum monitus, oraculorum præcæta, aruspicum prædicta, atque etiam parva dicta, in auguriis sternumenta et offensiones pedum." (*Hist. Nat.* ii. 5.) Pliny himself expresses great doubt about astrology, giving many samples of men with different destinies, who had been born at the same time, and therefore under the same stars (vii. 50). Tacitus expresses complete doubt about the existence of Providence. (*Ann.* vi. 22.) Tiberius is said to have been very indifferent to the gods and to the worship of the temples, being wholly addicted to astrology and convinced that all things were pre-ordained. (Suet. *Tib.* lxxix.)

⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, xxviii. 4.

Greece and Asia Minor might easily produce fine examples of the Epicurean type, but Rome was from the earliest times pre-eminently the home of Stoicism. Long before the Romans had begun to reason about philosophy they had exhibited it in action, and in their speculative days it was to this doctrine that the noblest minds naturally tended. A great nation engaged in perpetual wars, in an age when success in warfare depended neither upon wealth nor upon mechanical genius, but upon the constant energy of patriotic enthusiasm and upon the unflinching maintenance of military discipline—the whole force of the national character tended to the production of a single definite type. In the absolute authority accorded to the father over the children, to the husband over the wife, to the master over the slave, we may trace the same habits of discipline that proved so formidable in the field. Patriotism and military honour were indissolubly connected in the Roman mind. They were the two sources of national enthusiasm, the chief ingredients of the national conception of greatness. They determined irresistibly the moral theory which was to prove supreme.

Now war, which brings with it so many demoralising influences, has, at least, always been the great school of heroism. It teaches men how to die. It familiarises the mind with the idea of noble actions performed under the influence not of personal interest, but of honour and of enthusiasm. It elicits in the highest degree strength of character, accustoms men to the abnegation needed for simultaneous action, compels them to repress their fears and establish a firm control over their affections. Patriotism, too, leads them to subordinate their personal wishes to the interests of the society in which they live. It extends the horizon of life, teaching men to dwell among the great men of the past, to derive their moral strength from the study of heroic lives, to look forward continually, through the vistas of a distant future, to the welfare of an organisation which will continue when they have passed away. All these influences were developed in Roman life to a degree which can now never be reproduced. War, for the reasons I have stated, was far more than at present the school of heroic virtues. Patriotism, in the absence of any strong theological passion, had assumed a transcendent

power. The citizen, passing continually from political to military life, exhibited to perfection the moral effects of both. The habits of command formed by a long period of almost universal empire and by the aristocratic organisation of the city, contributed to the elevation and also to the pride of the national character.

It will appear, I think, sufficiently evident from these considerations that the circumstances of the Roman people tended inevitably to the production of a certain type of character which, in its essential characteristics, was the type of Stoicism. In addition to the predisposition which leads men, in their estimate of the comparative excellence of different qualities, to select for the highest eulogy those which are most congruous to their own characters, this fact derives a great importance from the large place which the biographical element occupied in ancient ethical teaching. Among Christians the ideals have commonly been either supernatural beings or men who were in constant connection with supernatural beings, and these men have usually been either Jews or saints, whose lives were of such a nature as to isolate them from most human sympathies, and to efface as far as possible the national type. Among the Greeks and Romans the examples of virtue were usually their own fellow-countrymen—men who had lived in the same moral atmosphere, struggled for the same ends, acquired their reputation in the same spheres, exhibited in all their intensity the same national characteristics, as their admirers. History had assumed a didactic character it has now almost wholly lost. One of the first tasks of every moralist was to collect traits of character illustrating the precepts he enforced. Valerius Maximus represented faithfully the method of the teachers of antiquity when he wrote his book giving a catalogue of different moral qualities, and illustrating each by a profusion of examples derived from the history of his own or of foreign nations. "Whenever," said Plutarch, "we begin an enterprise, or take possession of a charge, or experience a calamity, we place before our eyes the example of the greatest men of our own or of bygone ages, and we ask ourselves how Plato or Epaminondas, Lycurgus or Agesilaus, would have acted. Looking into these personages as into a faithful mirror, we can remedy our defects in word or deed.

.....Whenever any perplexity arrives, or any passion disturbs the mind, the student of philosophy pictures to himself some of those who have been celebrated for their virtue, and the recollection sustains his tottering steps and prevents his fall."

Passages of this kind continually occur in the ancient moralists,² and they show how naturally the highest type of national excellence determined the prevailing school of moral philosophy, and also how the influence of the heroic period of national history would act upon the best minds in the subsequent and wholly different phases of development. It was, therefore, not surprising that during the Empire, though the conditions of national life were profoundly altered, Stoicism should still be the philosophical religion, the great source and regulator of moral enthusiasm. Epicureanism had, indeed, spread widely in the Empire,³ but it proved little more than a principle of disintegration or an apology for vice, or at best the religion of tranquil and indifferent natures animated by no strong moral enthusiasm. It is, indeed, true that Epicurus had himself been a man of the most blameless character, that his doctrines were at first carefully distinguished from the coarse sensuality of the Cyrenaic school which had preceded them, that they admitted in theory almost every form of virtue, and that the school had produced many disciples who, if they had not attained the highest grades of excellence, had at least been men of harmless lives, intensely devoted to their master, and especially noted for the warmth and constancy of their friendships.⁴ But a school which placed so

high a value on ease and pleasure was eminently unfit to struggle against the fearful difficulties that beset the teachers of virtue amid the anarchy of a military despotism, and the virtues and the vices of the Romans were alike fatal to its success. All the great ideals of Roman excellence belonged to a different type. Such men as a Decius or a Regulus would have been impossible in an Epicurean society, for even if their actuating emotion were no nobler than a desire for posthumous fame, such a desire could never grow powerful in a moral atmosphere charged with the shrewd, placid, unsentimental utilitarianism of Epicurus. On the other hand, the distinctions the Epicureans had drawn between more or less refined pleasures and their elevated conceptions of what constitutes the true happiness of men, were unintelligible to the Romans, who knew how to sacrifice enjoyment, but who, when pursuing it, gravitated naturally to the coarsest forms. The mission of Epicureanism was, therefore, chiefly negative. The anti-patriotic tendency of its teaching contributed to that destruction of national feeling which was necessary to the rise of cosmopolitanism; while its strong opposition to theological beliefs, supported by the genius and enthusiasm of Lucretius, told powerfully upon the decaying faith.

Such being the functions of Epicureanism, the constructive or positive side of ethical teaching devolved almost exclusively upon Stoicism; for although there were a few philosophers who expressed themselves in strong opposition to some portions of the Stoical system, their efforts usually tended to no more than a modification of its extreme and harshest features. The Stoics asserted two cardinal principles—that virtue was the sole legitimate object to be aspired to, and that it involved so complete an ascendancy of the reason as altogether to extinguish the affections. The Peripatetics and many other philosophers, who derived their opinions chiefly from Plato, endeavoured to soften down the exaggeration of these

² *De Profectibus in Virt.* It was originally the custom at Roman feasts to sing to a pipe the actions and the virtues of the greatest men. (Cic. *Tusc. Quest.* iv.)

³ E.g. Epictetus, *Ench.* lii. Seneca is full of similar exhortations.

⁴ According to Cicero, the first Latin work on philosophy was by the Epicurean Amfanianus (*Tusc. Quest.* iv.).

⁵ See, on the great perfection of the character of Epicurus, his life by Diogenes Laertius, and on the purity of the philosophy he taught and the degree in which it was distorted and misrepresented by his Roman followers, Seneca, *De Vita Beata*, c. xii. xiii. and *Ep.* xxi. Gassendi, in a very interesting little work entitled *Philosophie Epicuri Syntaxma*, has abundantly proved the possibility of uniting Epicurean principles with a high code of morals. But probably the most beautiful picture of the Epicurean system is the first book of the *De Finibus*, in which Cicero endeavours to paint it as it would have been painted by its adherents. When we remember that the writer of this book was one of the most formidable and unflinch-

ing opponents of Epicureanism in all the ancient world, it must be owned that it would be impossible to find a grander example of that noble love of truth, that sublime and scrupulous justice to opponents, which was the pre-eminent glory of ancient philosophers, and which, after the destruction of philosophy, was for many centuries almost unknown in the world. It is impossible to doubt that Epicureanism was logically compatible with a very high degree of virtue. It is, I think, equally impossible to doubt that its practical tendency was towards vice.

principles. They admitted that virtue was an object wholly distinct from interest, and that it should be the leading motive of life; but they maintained that happiness was also a good, and a certain regard for it legitimate. They admitted that virtue consisted in the supremacy of the reason over the affections, but they allowed the exercise of the latter within restricted limits. The main distinguishing features, however, of Stoicism, the unselfish ideal and the controlling reason, were acquiesced in, and each represents an important side of the ancient conception of excellence, which we must now proceed to examine.

In the first we may easily trace the intellectual expression of the high spirit of self-sacrifice which the patriotic enthusiasm had elicited. The spirit of patriotism has this peculiar characteristic, that, while it has evoked acts of heroism which are both very numerous and very sublime, it has done so without presenting any prospect of personal immortality as a reward. Of all the forms of human heroism it is probably the most unselfish. The Spartan and the Roman died for his country because he loved it. The martyr's ecstasy of hope had no place in his dying hour. He gave up all he had, he closed his eyes, as he believed, for ever, and he asked for no reward in this world or in the next. Even the hope of posthumous fame—the most refined and supersensual of all that can be called reward—could exist only for the most conspicuous leaders. It was examples of this nature that formed the culminations or ideals of ancient systems of virtue, and they naturally led men to draw a very clear and deep distinction between the notions of interest and of duty. It may, indeed, be truly said that, while the conception of what constituted duty was often very imperfect in antiquity, the conviction that duty, as distinguished from every modification of selfishness, should be the supreme motive of life, was more clearly enforced among the Stoics than in any later society.

The reader will probably have gathered from the last chapter that there are four distinct motives which moral teachers may propose for the purpose of leading men to virtue. They may argue that the disposition of events is such that prosperity will attend a virtuous life, and adversity a vicious one—a proposition they may prove by pointing to the normal

course of affairs, and by asserting the existence of a special Providence in behalf of the good in the present world, and of rewards and punishments in the future. As far as these latter arguments are concerned, the efficacy of such teaching rests upon the firmness with which certain theological tenets are held, while the force of the first considerations will depend upon the degree and manner in which society is organised, for there are undoubtedly some conditions of society in which a perfectly upright life has not even a general tendency to prosperity. The peculiar circumstances and dispositions of individuals will also influence largely the way in which they receive such teaching, and, as Cicero observed, "what one utility has created, another will often destroy."

They may argue, again, that vice is to the mind what disease is to the body, and that a state of virtue is in consequence a state of health. Just as bodily health is desired for its own sake, as being the absence of a painful, or at least displeasing state, so a well-ordered and virtuous mind may be valued for its own sake, and independently of all the external good to which it may lead, as being a condition of happiness; and a mind distracted by passion and vice may be avoided, not so much because it is an obstacle in the pursuit of prosperity, as because it is in itself essentially painful and disturbing. This conception of virtue and vice as states of health or sickness, the one being in itself a good and the other in itself an evil, was a fundamental proposition in the ethics of Plato.¹ It was admitted, but only to a subsidiary place, by the Stoics,² and has passed more

¹ Mr. Grote gives the following very clear summary of Plato's ethical theory, which he believes to be original. "Justice is in the mind a condition analogous to good health and strength in the body. Injustice is a condition analogous to sickness, corruption, impotence in the body. . . . To possess a healthy body is desirable for its consequences as a means towards other constituents of happiness, but it is still more desirable in itself as an essential element of happiness *per se, i. e.*, the negation of sickness, which would of itself make us miserable. . . . In like manner, the just mind blesses the possessor twice—first and chiefly by bringing to him happiness in itself, next, also, as it leads to ulterior happy results. The unjust mind is a curse to its possessor in itself and apart from results, though it also leads to ulterior results which render it still more a curse to him." (Grote's *Plato*, vol. iii. p. 131.) According to Plutarch, Aristo of Chio defined virtue as "the health of the soul." (*De Virtute Morali*.)

² "Beata est ergo vita conveniens naturæ suæ, quæ non aliter contingere potest quam si primum sana mens sit et in perpetuâ possessione sanitatis suæ." (Seneca, *De Vita Beata*, c. li.)

or less into all the succeeding systems. It is especially favourable to large and elevating conceptions of self-culture, for it leads men to dwell much less upon isolated acts of virtue or vice than upon the habitual condition of mind from which they spring.

It is possible, in the third place, to argue in favour of virtue by offering as a motive that sense of pleasure which follows the deliberate performance of a virtuous act. This emotion is a distinct and isolated gratification following a distinct action, and may therefore be easily separated from that habitual placidity of temper which results from the extinction of vicious and perturbing impulses. It is this theory which is implied in the common exhortations to enjoy "the luxury of doing good," and though especially strong in acts of benevolence, in which case sympathy with the happiness created intensifies the feeling, this pleasure attends every kind of virtue.

These three motives of action have all this common characteristic, that they point as their ultimate end to the happiness of the agent. The first seeks that happiness in external circumstances; the second and third in psychological conditions. There is, however, a fourth kind of motive which may be urged, and which is the peculiar characteristic of the intuitive school of moralists and the stumbling-block of its opponents. It is asserted that we are so constituted that the notion of duty furnishes in itself a natural motive of action of the highest order, wholly distinct from all the refinements and modifications of self-interest. The co-active force of this motive is altogether independent of surrounding circumstances, and of all forms of belief. It is equally true for the man who believes and for the man who rejects the Christian faith, for the believer in a future world and for the believer in the mortality of the soul. It is not a question of happiness or unhappiness, of reward or punishment, but of a generically different nature. Men feel that a certain course of life is the natural end of their being, and they feel bound, even at the expense of happiness, to pursue it. They feel that certain acts are essentially good and noble, and others essentially base and vile, and this perception leads them to pursue the one, and to avoid the other, irrespective of all considerations of enjoyment.

I have recurred to these distinctions,

which were more fully discussed in the last chapter, because the school of philosophy we are reviewing furnishes the most perfect of all historical examples of the power which the higher of these motives can exercise over the mind. The coarser forms of self-interest were in Stoicism absolutely condemned. It was one of the first principles of these philosophers that all things that are not in our power should be esteemed indifferent; that the object of all mental discipline should be to withdraw the mind from all the gifts of fortune, and that prudence must in consequence be altogether excluded from the motives of virtue. To enforce these principles they continually dilated upon the vanity of human things, and upon the majesty of the independent mind, and they indulged, though scarcely more than other sects, in many exaggerations about the impassive tranquillity of the sage.¹ In the Roman Empire Stoicism flourished at a period which, beyond almost any other, seemed unfavourable to such teaching. There were reigns when, in the emphatic words of Tacitus, "virtue was a sentence of death." In no period had brute force more completely triumphed, in none was the thirst for material advantages more intense, in very few was vice more ostentatiously glorified. Yet in the midst of all these circumstances the Stoics taught a philosophy which was not a compromise or an attempt to moderate the popular excesses, but which was rather in its austere sanctity the extreme antithesis of all that the prevailing examples and their own interests could dictate. And these men were no impassioned fanatics, fired with the prospect of coming glory. They were men from whose motives of action the belief in the immortality of the soul was resolutely excluded. In the scepticism that accompanied the first introduction of philosophy into Rome, in the dissolution of the old fables about Tartarus and the Styx, and the dissemination of Epicureanism among the people, this doctrine had sunk very low, notwithstanding the beautiful reasonings of Cicero and the religious faith of a few who clung, like Plutarch, to the mysteries in which it was perpetuated. An interlocutor in Cicero expressed what

¹ The famous paradox, that "the sage could be happy even in the bull of Phalaris," comes from the writings not of Zeno but of Epicurus—though the Stoics adopted and greatly admired it. (Cic. *Tusc.* ii. See Gassendi, *Philos. Epicuri Syntagma*, pars iii. c. 1.)

was probably a common feeling when he acknowledged that, with the writings of Plato before him, he could believe and realise it; but when he closed the book the reasonings seemed to lose their power, and the world of spirits grew pale and unreal.¹ If Ennius could elicit the plaudits of a theatre when he proclaimed that the gods took no part in human affairs, Cæsar could assert in the Senate, without scandal and almost without dissent, that death was the end of all things.² Pliny, perhaps the greatest of Roman scholars, adopting the sentiment of all the school of Epicurus, describes the belief in a future life as a form of madness, a puerile and a pernicious illusion.³ The opinions of the Stoics were wavering and uncertain. Their first doctrine was that the soul of man has a future and independent, but not an eternal existence, that it survives until the last conflagration which was to destroy the world and absorb all finite things into the all-pervading soul of nature. Chrysippus, however, restricted to the best and noblest souls this future existence, which Cleanthes had awarded to all,⁴ and among the Roman Stoics even this was greatly doubted. The belief that the human soul is a detached fragment of the Deity naturally led to the belief that after death it would be reabsorbed into the parent Spirit. The doctrine that there is no real good but virtue deprived the Stoics of the argument for a future world derived from unrequited merit and unpunished crime, and the earnestness with which they contended that a good man should act irrespectively of reward inclined them, as it is said to have inclined some Jewish thinkers,⁵ to the denial of the existence of

the reward.¹ Panætius, the founder of Roman Stoicism, maintained that the soul perished with the body,² and his opinion was followed by Epictetus³ and Cornutus.⁴ Seneca contradicted himself on the subject.⁵ Marcus Aurelius never rose beyond a vague and mournful aspiration. Those who believed in a future world believed in it faintly and uncertainly, and even when they accepted it as a fact, they shrank from proposing it as a motive. The whole system of Stoical ethics, which carried self-sacrifice to a point that has scarcely been equalled, and exercised an influence which has rarely been surpassed, was evolved without any assistance from the doctrine of a future life.⁶ Pagan antiquity has bequeathed us few nobler treatises of morals than the *De Officiis* of Cicero, which was avowedly an expansion of a work of Panætius.⁷ It has left us no grander example than that of Epictetus, the sickly, deformed slave of a master who was notorious for his barbarity, enfranchised late in life, but soon driven into exile by Domitian; who, while sounding the very abyss of human misery, and looking forward to death as to simple decomposition, was yet so filled with the sense of the Divine presence that his life was one continued hymn to Providence, and his writings and his example, which appeared to his contemporaries almost the ideal of human goodness, have not lost their consoling power through all the ages and the vicissitudes they have survived.⁸

ingly unsatisfactory. The reader may find its history in a very remarkable article by Mr. Twissleton on *Sadducees*, in Smith's *Biblical Dictionary*.

¹ On the Stoical opinions about a future life see Martin, *La Vie future* (Paris, 1858); Courdaveaux, *De l'immortalité de l'âme dans le Stoïcisme* (Paris, 1857); and Alger's *Critical Hist. of the Doctrine of a Future Life* (New York, 1866).

² His arguments are met by Cicero in the *Tusculans*.

³ See a collection of passages from his discourses collected by M. Courdaveaux, in the introduction to his French translation of that book.

⁴ Stobæus, *Eclor. Physic.* lib. 1, cap. 52.

⁵ In his *Consolations* to Marcia he seems to incline to a belief in the immortality, or at least the future existence, of the soul. In many other passages, however, he speaks of it as annihilated at death.

⁶ "Les Stoïciens ne faisaient aucunement dépendre la morale de la perspective des peines ou de la rémunération dans une vie future. La croyance à l'immortalité de l'âme n'appartenait donc, selon leur manière de voir, qu'à la physique, c'est-à-dire à la psychologie." (Degerando, *Hist. de la Philos.* tome iii p. 56.)

⁷ "Panætius igitur, qui sine controversia de officiis accuratissime disputavit, quemque nos, correctione quadam adhibita, potissimum secuti sumus." (*De Offic.* iii 2.)

⁸ Marcus Aurelius thanks Providence, as for one of the great blessings of his life, that he had been made

¹ "Sed nescio quomodo dum lego assentior; cum posui librum et mecum ipse de immortalitate animorum ceppi cogitare, assensio omnis illa elabitur" (Cic. *Tusc.* i).

² Sallust, *Catiline*, cap. 11.

³ See that most impressive passage (*Hist. Nat.* vii 55) That the sleep of annihilation is the happiest end of man is a favourite thought of Lucretius. Thus:—

"Nil igitur mors est, ad nos neque pertinet hilum, Quandoquidem natura animi mortalis habetur"

(iii 842.) This mode of thought has been recently expressed in Mr. Swinburne's very beautiful poem on *The Garden of Proserpine*.

⁴ Diog. Laërtius. The opinion of Chrysippus seems to have prevailed, and Plutarch (*De Placit. Philos.*) speaks of it as that of the school. Cicero sarcastically says: "Stoici autem usuram nobis largiuntur, tanquam cornibus: diu mansuros aiunt animos; semper, negant." (*Tusc. Disp.* i. 37.)

⁵ It has been very frequently asserted that, Antigonus of Socho having taught that virtue should be practised for its own sake, his disciple Zadok, the founder of the Sadducees, inferred the non-existence of a future world, but the evidence for this whole story is exceed-

There was, however, another form of immortality which exercised a much greater influence among the Roman moralists. The desire for reputation, and especially for posthumous reputation—"that last infirmity of noble minds"—assumed an extraordinary prominence among the springs of Roman heroism, and was also the origin of that theatrical and overstrained phraseology which the greatest of ancient moralists rarely escaped.² But we should be altogether in error if we inferred, as some have done, that paganism never rose to the conception of virtue concealing itself from the world, and consenting voluntarily to degradation. No characters were more highly appreciated in antiquity than those of men who, through a sense of duty, opposed the strong current of popular favour; of men like Fabius, who consented for the sake of their country to incur the reputation that is most fatal to a soldier;³ of men like Cato, who remained unmoved among the scoffs, the insults, and the ridicule of an angry crowd.⁴ Cicero, expounding the principles of Stoicism, declared that no one has attained to true philosophy who has not learnt that all vice should be avoided, "though it were concealed from the eyes of gods and men,"⁵ and that no deeds are more laudable than those which are done without ostentation, and far from the sight of men.⁶ The writings of the Stoics are crowded with sentences to the same

effect. "Nothing for opinion, all for conscience."⁷ "He who wishes his virtue to be blazed abroad is not labouring for virtue, but for fame."⁸ "No one is more virtuous than the man who sacrifices the reputation of a good man rather than sacrifice his conscience."⁹ "I do not shrink from praise, but I refuse to make it the end and term of right."¹⁰ "If you do anything to please men, you have fallen from your estate."¹¹ "Even a bad reputation nobly earned is pleasing."¹² "A great man is not the less great when he lies vanquished and prostrate in the dust."¹³ "Never forget that it is possible to be at once a divine man, yet a man unknown to all the world."¹⁴ "That which is beautiful is beautiful in itself; the praise of man adds nothing to its quality."¹⁵ Marcus Aurelius, following an example that is ascribed to Pythagoras, made it a special object of mental discipline, by continually meditating on death, and evoking, by an effort of the imagination, whole societies that had passed away, to acquire a realised sense of the vanity of posthumous fame. The younger Pliny painted faithfully the ideal of Stoicism when he described one of his friends as a man "who did nothing for ostentation, but all for conscience; who sought the reward of virtue in itself, and not in the praise of man."¹⁶ Nor were the Stoics less emphatic in distinguishing the obligation from the attraction of virtue. It was on this point that they separated from the more refined Epicureans, who were often willing to sublimate to the highest degree the kind of pleasure they proposed as an object, provided only it were admitted that pleasure is necessarily the ultimate end of our actions. But this the Stoics firmly denied. "Pleasure," they argued, "is the companion, not the guide, of our course."¹⁷ "We do not love virtue because it gives us pleasure, but it gives us pleasure because we love it."¹⁸ "The wise man will not sin, though both gods and men should overlook the deed, for it is

acquainted with the writings of Epictetus. The story is well known how the old philosopher warned his master, who was beating him, that he would soon break his leg, and when the leg was broken, calmly remarked, "I told you you would do so." Celsus quoted this in opposition to the Christians, asking, "Did your leader under suffering ever say anything so noble?" Origen finely replied, "He did what was still nobler—he kept silence." A Christian anchorite (some say St. Nilus, who lived in the beginning of the fifth century) was so struck with the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus that he adapted it to Christian use. The conversations of Epictetus, as reported by Arrian, are said to have been the favourite reading of Tous-saint l'Ouverture.

² Tacitus had used this expression before Milton "Quando etiam sapientibus cupido gloriæ novissima exiit." (*Hist.* iv. 6.)

³ Two remarkable instances have come down to us of eminent writers begging historians to adorn and even exaggerate their acts. See the very curious letters of Cicero to the historian Luccius (*Ep. ad Divers.* v. 12); and of the younger Pliny to Tacitus (*Ep.* vii. 33). Cicero has himself confessed that he was too fond of glory

⁴ "Unus homo nobis cunctando restituit rem;

Non ponebat enim rumores ante salutem."

—Ennius.

⁵ See the beautiful description of Cato's tranquillity under insults. Seneca, *De Ira*, ii. 33; *De Const.*

Sap. i. 2.

⁶ *De Officiis*, iii. 9.

⁷ *Tusc.* ii. 26.

¹ Seneca, *De Vit. Beat.* c. xx

² Seneca, *Ep.* cxiii

³ Seneca, *Ep.* lxxxi.

⁴ Persius, *Sat.* i. 45-47.

⁵ Epictetus, *Ench.* xiii.

⁶ Seneca, *De Ira*, iii. 41.

⁷ Seneca, *Cons. ad Helv.* xiii.

⁸ Marc. Aur. vii. 67.

⁹ Marc. Aur. iv. 20.

¹⁰ Pliny, *Ep.* i. 22.

¹¹ "Non dux, sed comes voluptas."

(*De Vit. Beat.*

c. viii.)

¹² "Voluptas non est merces nec causa virtutis, sed

accessio; nec quia delectat placet sed quia placet

delectat." (*Ep.* c. ix.)

not through the fear of punishment or of shame that he abstains from sin. It is from the desire and obligation of what is just and good."¹ "To ask to be paid for virtue is as if the eye demanded a recompense for seeing, or the feet for walking."² In doing good, man "should be like the vine which has produced grapes, and asks for nothing more after it has produced its proper fruit."³ His end, according to these teachers, is not to find peace either in life or in death. It is to do his duty, and to tell the truth.

The second distinguishing feature of Stoicism I have noticed was the complete suppression of the affections to make way for the absolute ascendancy of reason. There are two great divisions of character corresponding very nearly to the Stoical and Epicurean temperaments I have described—that in which the will predominates, and that in which the desires are supreme. A good man of the first class is one whose will, directed by a sense of duty, pursues the course he believes to be right, in spite of strong temptations to pursue an opposite course, arising either from his own passions and tendencies, or from the circumstances that surround him. A good man of the second class is one who is so happily constituted that his sympathies and desires instinctively tend to virtuous ends. The first character is the only one to which we can, strictly speaking, attach the idea of merit, and it is also the only one which is capable of rising to high efforts of continuous and heroic self-sacrifice; but, on the other hand, there is a charm in the spontaneous action of the unforced desires which disciplined virtue can perhaps never attain. The man who is consistently generous through a sense of duty, when his natural temperament impels him to avarice, and when every exercise of benevolence causes him a pang, deserves in the very highest degree our admiration; but he whose generosity costs him no effort, but is the natural gratification of his affections, attracts a far larger measure of our love. Corresponding to these two casts of character, we find two distinct theories of education, the aim of the one being chiefly to strengthen the will, and that of the other to guide the desires. The principal

examples of the first are the Spartan and Stoical systems of antiquity, and, with some modifications, the asceticism of the Middle Ages. The object of these systems was to enable men to endure pain, to repress manifest and acknowledged desires, to relinquish enjoyments, to establish an absolute empire over their emotions. On the other hand, there is a method of education which was never more prevalent than in the present day, which exhausts its efforts in making virtue attractive, in associating "with all the charms of imagination and of prosperity, and in thus insensibly drawing the desires in the wished-for direction. As the first system is especially suited to a disturbed and military society, which requires and elicits strong efforts of the will, and is therefore the special sphere of heroic virtues, so the latter belongs naturally to a tranquil and highly organised civilisation, which is therefore very favourable to the amiable qualities, and it is probable that as civilisation advances the heroic type will in consequence become more and more rare, and a kind of self-indulgent goodness more common. The circumstances of the ancient societies led them to the former type, of which the Stoics furnished the extreme expression in their doctrine that the affections are of the nature of a disease⁴—a doctrine which they justified by the same kind of arguments as those which are now often employed by metaphysicians to prove that love, anger, and the like can only be ascribed by a figure of speech to the Deity. Perturbation, they contended, is necessarily imperfection, and none of its forms can in consequence be ascribed to a perfect being. We have a clear intuitive perception that reason is the highest, and should be the directing, power of an intelligent being; but every act which is performed at the instigation of the emotions is withdrawn from the empire of reason. Hence it was inferred that while the will should be

¹ Seneca, however, in one of his letters (De ira), subtilises a good deal on this point. He draws a distinction between affections and impulses. The first, he says, are irrational, and therefore reprehensible movements of the soul, which, if repeated and unexpressed, tend to form an irrational and evil habit, and to the last he in this letter restricts the term disease. He illustrates this distinction by observing that colds and any other slight ailments if unchecked and neglected, may produce an organic disease. The wise man, he says, is wholly free from moral disease but no man can completely emancipate himself from affections, though he should make this his constant object.

² Peregrinus apud Aul. Gellius, xii. 11. Peregrinus was a Cynic, but his doctrine on this point was identical with that of the Stoics.

³ Marc. Aur. ix. 42.

⁴ Marc. Aur. v. 6.

educated to act habitually in the direction of virtue, even the emotions that seem most fitted to second it should be absolutely proscribed. Thus Seneca has elaborated at length the distinction between clemency and pity, the first being one of the highest virtues, and the latter a positive vice. Clemency, he says, is an habitual disposition to gentleness in the application of punishments. It is that moderation which remits something of an incurred penalty; it is the opposite of cruelty, which is an habitual disposition to rigour. Pity, on the other hand, bears to clemency the same kind of relation as superstition to religion. It is the weakness of a feeble mind that flinches at the sight of suffering. Clemency is an act of judgment, but pity disturbs the judgment. Clemency adjudicates upon the proportion between suffering and guilt. Pity contemplates only suffering, and gives no thought to its cause. Clemency, in the midst of its noblest efforts, is perfectly passionless; pity is unreasoning emotion. Clemency is an essential characteristic of the sage; pity is only suited for weak women and for diseased minds. "The sage will console those who weep, but without weeping with them; he will succour the shipwrecked, give hospitality to the proscribed, and alms to the poor,.....restore the son to the mother's tears, save the captive from the arena, and even bury the criminal; but in all this his mind and his countenance will be alike untroubled. He will feel no pity. He will succour, he will do good, for he is born to assist his fellows, to labour for the welfare of mankind, and to offer to each one his part.....His countenance and his soul will betray no emotion as he looks upon the withered legs, the tattered rags, the bent and emaciated frame of the beggar. But he will help those who are worthy, and, like the gods, his leaning will be towards the wretched.....It is only diseased eyes that grow moist in beholding tears in other eyes, as it is no true sympathy, but only weakness of nerves, that leads some to laugh always when others laugh, or to yawn when others yawn."

Cicero, in a sentence which might be adopted as the motto of Stoicism, said that Homer "attributed human qualities to the gods; it would have been better to have imparted divine qualities to

men." The remarkable passage I have just cited serves to show the extremes to which the Stoics pushed this imitation. And, indeed, if we compare the different virtues that have flourished among Pagans and Christians, we invariably find that the prevailing type of excellence among the former is that in which the will and judgment, and among the latter that in which the emotions, are most prominent. Friendship rather than love, hospitality rather than charity, magnanimity rather than tenderness, clemency rather than sympathy, are the characteristics of ancient goodness. The Stoics, who carried the suppression of the emotions farther than any other school, laboured with great zeal to compensate the injury thus done to the benevolent side of our nature by greatly enlarging the sphere of reasoned and passionless philanthropy. They taught, in the most emphatic language, the fraternity of all men, and the consequent duty of each man consecrating his life to the welfare of others. They developed this general doctrine in a series of detailed precepts, which, for the range, depth, and beauty of their charity, have never been surpassed. They even extended their compassion to crime, and, adopting the paradox of Plato that all guilt is ignorance,¹ treated it as an involuntary disease, and declared that the only legitimate ground of punishment is prevention.² But, however fully they might reconcile in theory their principles with the widest and most active benevolence, they could not wholly counteract the practical evil of a system which declared war against the whole emotional side of our being, and reduced human virtue to a kind of majestic egotism; proposing as examples Anaxagoras, who, when told that his son had died, simply observed, "I never supposed that I had begotten an immortal"; or Stilpo, who, when his country had been ruined, his native city captured, and his daughters carried away as slaves or as concubines, boasted that he had lost nothing, for the sage is inde-

¹ "Peccantes vero quid habet cur oderit, cum error illos in huiusmodi delicta compellat?" (Sen. *De Ira*, i. 14.) This is a favourite thought of Marcus Aurelius, to which he reverts again and again. See, too, Arrian, i. 18.

² "Ergo ne homini quidem nocebimus quia peccavit sed ne peccet, nec unquam ad præteritum sed ad futurum poena referetur." (*Ibid.* ii. 31.) In the philosophy of Plato, on the other hand, punishment was chiefly expiatory and purificatory. (Lerminier, *Introd. à l'Histoire du Droit*, p. 123.)

³ *De Clem.* ii. 6, 7.

pendent of circumstances.¹ The framework or theory of benevolence might be there, but the animating spirit was absent. Men who taught that the husband or the father should look with perfect indifference on the death of his wife or his child, and that the philosopher, though he may shed tears of pretended sympathy in order to console his suffering friend, must suffer no real emotion to penetrate his breast,² could never found a true or lasting religion of benevolence. Men who refused to recognise pain and sickness as evils were scarcely likely to be very eager to relieve them in others.

In truth, the Stoics, who taught that all virtue was conformity to nature, were in this respect eminently false to their own principle. Human nature, as revealed to us by reason, is a composite thing, a constitution of many parts differing in kind and dignity, a hierarchy in which many powers are intended to co-exist, but in different positions of ascendancy or subordination. To make the higher part of our nature our whole nature is not to restore but to mutilate humanity, and this mutilation has never been attempted without producing grave evils. As philanthropists, the Stoics, through their passion for unity, were led to the extirpation of those emotions which nature intended as the chief springs of benevolence. As speculative philosophers, they were entangled by the same desire in a long train of pitiable paradoxes. Their famous doctrines that all virtues are equal, or, more correctly, are the same; that all vices are equal; that nothing is an evil which does not affect our will, and that pain and bereavement are, in consequence, no ills;³ though partially explained away and frequently

disregarded by the Roman Stoics, were yet sufficiently prominent to give their teaching something of an unnatural and affected appearance. Prizing only a single object, and developing only a single side of their nature, their minds became narrow and their views contracted. Thus, while the Epicureans, urging men to study nature in order to banish superstition, endeavoured to correct that ignorance of physical science which was one of the chief impediments to the progress of the ancient mind, the Stoics for the most part disdained a study which was other than the pursuit of virtue.⁴ While the Epicurean poet painted in magnificent language the perpetual progress of mankind, the Stoic was essentially retrospective, and exhausted his strength in vain efforts to restore the simplicity of a bygone age. While, too, the school of Zeno produced many of the best and greatest men who have ever lived, it must be acknowledged that its records exhibit a rather unusual number of examples of high professions falsified in action, and of men who, displaying in some forms the most undoubted and transcendent virtue, fell in others far below the average of mankind. The elder Cato, who, though not a philosopher, was a model of philosophers, was conspicuous for his inhumanity to his slaves.⁵ Brutus was one of the most extortionate usurers of his time, and several citizens of Salamis died of starvation, imprisoned because they could not pay the sum he demanded.⁶ No one eulogised more eloquently the austere simplicity of life which Stoicism advocated than Sallust, who in a corrupt age was notorious for his rapacity. Seneca himself was constitutionally a nervous and timid man, endeavouring—not always with success—to support himself by a sublime philosophy. He guided, under circumstances of extreme difficulty, the cause of virtue, and his death is one

¹ Seneca, *De constant Sap.* v. Compare and contrast this famous sentence of Anaxagoras with that of one of the early Christian hermits. Someone told the hermit that his father was dead. "Cease your blasphemy," he answered, "my father is immortal" (Socrates, *Ecol. Hist.* iv. 23).

² Epictetus, *Ench.* 16, 18.

³ The dispute about whether anything but virtue is a good was, in reality, a somewhat childish quarrel about words; for the Stoics, who indignantly denounced the Peripatetics for maintaining the affirmative, admitted that health, friends, etc., should be sought not as "goods," but as "preferables" (See a long discussion on this matter in Cicero (*De Finib.* lib. iii. iv)). The Stoical doctrine of the equality of all vices was formally repudiated by Marcus Aurelius, who maintained (ii. 10), with Theophrastus, that faults of desire were worse than faults of anger. The other Stoics, while dogmatically asserting the equality of all virtues as well as the equality of all vices, in their particular judgments graduated their praise or blame much in the same way as the rest of the world.

⁴ See Seneca (*Ep.* lxxxix.). Seneca himself, however, has devoted a work to natural history, but the general tendency of the school was certainly to concentrate all attention upon morals, and all, or nearly all, the great naturalists were Epicureans. Cicero puts into the mouth of the Epicurean the sentence: "Omnium autem rerum natura cognita levatur superstitione, liberamur mortis metu, non conturbamur ignorantia rerum" (*De Fin.* i.); and Virgil expressed an eminently Epicurean sentiment in his famous lines:—

"Felix, qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,
Quique metus omnes et inexorabile fatum
Subiecit pedibus, strepitumque Acherontis avari"
—*Georg.* 490-492.

⁵ Plutarch, *Cato Major*.

⁶ Cicero, *Ad Attic.*, vi. 2.

of the noblest antiquity records; but his life was deeply marked by the taint of flattery, and not free from the taint of avarice, and it is, unhappily, certain that he lent his pen to conceal or varnish one of the worst crimes of Nero. The courage of Lucan failed signally under torture, and the flattery which he bestowed upon Nero, in his *Pharsalia*, ranks with the Epigrams of Martial as probably the extreme limit of sycophancy to which Roman literature descended.

While, too, the main object of the Stoics was to popularise philosophy, the high standard of self-control they exacted rendered their system exceedingly unfit for the great majority of mankind and for the ordinary condition of affairs. Life is history, not poetry. It consists mainly of little things, rarely illumined by flashes of great heroism, rarely broken by great dangers, or demanding great exertions. A moral system, to govern society, must accommodate itself to common characters and mingled motives. It must be capable of influencing natures that can never rise to an heroic level. It must tincture, modify, and mitigate where it cannot eradicate or transform. In Christianity there are always a few persons seeking, by continual and painful efforts, to reverse or extinguish the ordinary feelings of humanity; but in the great majority of cases the influence of the religious principle upon the mind, though very real, is not of a nature to cause any serious strain or struggle. It is displayed in a certain acquired spontaneity of impulse. It softens the character, purifies and directs the imagination, blends insensibly with the habitual modes of thought, and, without revolutionising, gives a tone and bias to all the forms of action. But Stoicism was simply a school of heroes. It recognised no gradations of virtue or vice. It condemned all emotions, all spontaneity, all mingled motives, all the principles, feelings, and impulses upon which the virtue of common men mainly depends. It was capable of acting only on moral natures that were strung to the highest tension, and it was, therefore, naturally rejected by the multitude.

The central conception of this philosophy of self-control was the dignity of man. Pride, which looks within, making man seek his own approbation—as distinguished from vanity, which looks without, and shapes its conduct according to the opinions of others—was not

only permitted in Stoicism, it was even its leading moral agent. The sense of virtue, as I have elsewhere observed, occupies in this system much the same place as the sense of sin in Christianity. Sin, in the conception of the ancients, was simply disease, and they deemed it the part of a wise man to correct it, but not to dwell upon its circumstances. In the many disquisitions which Epictetus and others have left us concerning the proper frame of mind in which man should approach death, repentance for past sin has absolutely no place, nor do the ancients appear to have ever realised the purifying and spiritualising influence it exercises upon character. And while the reality of moral disease was fully recognised, while a lofty, and indeed unattainable, ideal was continually proposed, no one doubted the essential excellence of human nature, and very few doubted the possibility of man acquiring by his own will a high degree of virtue. In this last respect there was a wide difference between the teaching of the Roman moralists and of the Greek poets.¹ Homer continually represents courage, anger, and the like as the direct inspiration of heaven. Æschylus, the great poet of fatalism, regards every human passion as but a single link in the great chain of causes forged by the inexorable will of Zeus. There are, indeed, few grander things in poetry than his picture of the many and various motives that urged Clytemnestra to the slaughter of Agamemnon—revenge for her murdered daughter, love for Ægisthus, resentment at past breaches of conjugal duty, jealousy of Cassandra—all blending in that fierce hatred that nerved her arm against her husband's life; while above all this tumult of passion the solemn song of Cassandra proclaimed that the deed was but the decree of Heaven, the harvest of blood springing from the seed of crime, the accomplishment of the ancient curse that was destined to cling for ever to the hapless race of Atreus. Before the body of the murdered king, and in presence of the wildest paroxysms of human passion, the bystanders bowed their heads, exclaiming, "Zeus has willed it—Zeus the

¹ This contrast is noticed and largely illustrated by M. Montée in his interesting little work *Le Stoïcisme à Rome*, and also by Legendre in his *Traité de l'Opinion, ou Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de l'esprit humain* (Venise, 1735).

supreme Ruler, the God who does all; for what can happen in the world without the will of Zeus?"

But conceptions of this kind had little or no place in the philosophy of Rome. The issue of human enterprises and the disposition of the gifts of fortune were recognised as under the control of Providence; but man was master of his own feelings, and was capable of attaining such excellence that he might even challenge comparison with the gods. Audacious as such sentiments may now appear, they were common to most schools of Roman moralists. "We boast justly of our own virtue," said the eclectic Cicero, "which we could not do if we derived it from the Deity and not from ourselves." "All mortals judge that fortune is to be received from the gods and wisdom from ourselves." The Epicurean Horace, in his noblest ode, described the just man, confident in his virtue, undaunted amid the crash of worlds, and he tells us to pray only for those things which Jupiter gives and takes away. "He gives life, he gives wealth; an untroubled mind I secure for myself."¹ "The calm of a mind blest in the consciousness of its virtue" was the expression of supreme felicity the Epicureans had derived from their master.² Lucretius, in a magnificent passage, designates Epicurus as a god, and boasts that the popular divinities dwindle into insignificance before him. Ceres, he says, gave men corn, and Bacchus wine, but Epicurus the principles of virtue. Hercules conquered monsters, Epicurus conquered vice.³ "Pray," said Juvenal, "for a healthy mind in a healthy body. Ask for a brave soul unscared by death..... But there are things you can give yourself."⁴ "Misfortune, and losses, and calumny," said Seneca, "disappear before virtue as the taper before the sun."⁵ "In

one point the sage is superior to God. God owes it to His nature not to fear, but the sage owes it to himself. Sublime condition! he joins the frailty of a man to the security of a god."⁶ "Except for immortality," he elsewhere writes, "the sage is like to God."⁷ "It is the characteristic of a wise man," added Epictetus, "that he looks for all his good and evil from himself."⁸ "As far as his rational nature is concerned, he is in no degree inferior to the gods."⁹

There were, however, other veins of thought exhibited in Stoicism which greatly modified and sometimes positively contradicted this view of the relations of man to the Deity. The theology of the Stoics was an ill-defined, uncertain, and somewhat inconsistent Pantheism; the Divinity was especially worshipped under the two aspects of Providence and moral goodness, and the soul of man was regarded as "a detached fragment of the Deity,"¹⁰ or as at least pervaded and accompanied by a divine energy. "There never," said Cicero, "was a great man without an inspiration from on high."¹¹ "Nothing," said Seneca, "is closed to God. He is present in our conscience. He intervenes in our thoughts."¹² "I tell thee, Lucilius," he elsewhere writes, "a sacred spirit dwells within us, the observer and the guardian of our good and evil deeds..... No man is good without God. Who, save by His assistance, can rise above fortune? He gives noble and lofty counsels. A God (what God I know not) dwells in every good man."¹³ "Offer to the God that is in thee," said Marcus Aurelius, "a manly being, a citizen, a soldier at his post ready to depart from life as soon as the trumpet sounds."¹⁴ "It is sufficient to believe in the Genius who is within us, and to honour him by a pure worship."¹⁵

Passages of this kind are not unfrequent in Stoical writings. More commonly, however, virtue is represented as a human act imitating God. This was the meaning of the Platonic maxim,

¹ "Atque hoc quidem omnes mortales sic habent commoditatem prosperitatemque vite a deo se habere, virtutem autem nemo unquam acceptam deo reulit. Nimirum recte. Propter virtutem enim jure laudamur et in virtute recte gloriamur. Quod non contingeret si id donum a deo, non a nobis haberemus." (Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.* i. 36.)

² *Ep.* i. 18.

³ Seneca, *Ep.* lxi.

⁴ Lucretius, v. It was a Greek proverb that Apollo begat Æsculapius to heal the body, and Plato to heal the soul. (Legendre, *Traité de l'Opinion*, tome 1 p. 137.)

⁵ "Orandum est ut sit mens sana in corpore sano."

⁶ Fortem posce animum, mortis terrore carentem Monstro, quod ipse tibi possis dare.

—Juvenal, *Sat.* x. 336.

Marcus Aurelius recommends prayer, but only that we may be freed from evil desires. (ix. 11.)

⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* lxi.

⁸ Seneca, *Ep.* lii.

⁹ *Ench.* xlviii.

¹⁰ Arrian, ii. 8. The same doctrine is strongly stated in Seneca (*Ep.* xcii.)

¹¹ Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.* ii. 66.

¹² *Ep.* lxxxiii. Somewhat similar sentiments are attributed to Thales and Bion (Diog. Laert.)

¹³ *Ep.* xli. There are some beautiful sentiments of this kind in Plutarch's treatise, *De Sera Numinis Vindicta*. It was a saying of Pythagoras that "we become better as we approach the gods."

¹⁴ Marc. Aur. iii. 5.

¹⁵ *De Const. Sap.* viii.

Arrian, i. 12.

Marc. Aur.

"Follow God," which the Stoics continually repeated, which they developed in many passages of the most touching and beautiful piety, and to which they added the duty of the most absolute and unquestioning submission to the decrees of Providence. Their doctrine on this latter point harmonised well with their antipathy to the emotional side of our being. "To weep, to complain, to groan, is to rebel";¹ "to fear, to grieve, to be angry, is to be a deserter."² "Remember that you are but an actor, acting whatever part the Master has ordained. It may be short, or it may be long. If he wishes you to represent a poor man, do so heartily; if a cripple, or a magistrate, or a private man, in each case act your part with honour."³ "Never say of anything that you have lost it, but that you have restored it; your wife and child die—you have restored them; your farm is taken from you—that also is restored. It is seized by an impious man. What is it to you by whose instrumentality He who gave it reclaims it?"⁴ "God does not keep a good man in prosperity. He tries, He strengthens him, He prepares him for Himself."⁵ "Those whom God approves, whom He loves, He hardens, He proves, He exercises; but those whom He seems to indulge and spare, He preserves for future ills."⁶ With a beautiful outburst of submissive gratitude, Marcus Aurelius exclaims, "Some have said, O dear city of Cecrops!—but thou, canst thou say, O dear city of Jupiter?..... All that is suitable to thee, O world, is suitable to me."⁷

These passages, which might be indefinitely multiplied, serve to show how successfully the Stoics laboured, by dilating upon the conception of Providence, to mitigate the arrogance which one aspect of their teaching unquestionably displayed. But in this very attempt another danger was incurred, upon which a very large proportion of the moral systems of all ages have been wrecked. A doctrine which thus enjoins absolute submission to the decrees of Providence,⁸

which proscribes the affections, and which represents its disciples as altogether independent of surrounding circumstances, would in most conditions of society have led necessarily to quietism, and proved absolutely incompatible with active virtue. Fortunately, however, in the ancient civilisations the idea of virtue had from the earliest times been so indissolubly connected with that of political activity that the danger was for a long period altogether avoided. The State occupied in antiquity a prominence in the thoughts of men which it never has attained in modern times. The influence of patriotism thrilled through every fibre of moral and intellectual life. The most profound philosophers, the purest moralists, the most sublime poets, had been soldiers or statesmen. Hence arose the excessive predominance occasionally accorded to civic virtues in ancient systems of ethics, and also not a few of their most revolting paradoxes. Plato advocated community of wives, mainly on the ground that the children produced would be attached more exclusively to their country.¹ Aristotle may be almost said to have made the difference between Greek and barbarian the basis of his moral code. The Spartan legislation was continually extolled as an ideal, as the Venetian constitution by the writers of the seventeenth century. On the other hand, the contact of the spheres of speculation and of political activity exercised in one respect a very beneficial influence upon ancient philosophies. Patriotism almost always occupied a prominence in the scale of duties which forms a striking contrast to the neglect or discredit into which it has fallen among modern teachers. We do, indeed, read of an Anaxagoras pointing to heaven as to his true country, and pronouncing exile to be no evil, as the descent to the infernal regions is the same from every land;² but such sentiments, though not unknown among the Epicureans and the Cynics,

Chrysippus exerted his subtlety in reconciling the two things. See, too, Arnab. i. 17.

¹ We have an extremely curious illustration of this mode of thought in a speech of Archytas of Tarentum on the evils of sensuality, which Cicero has preserved. He considers the greatest of these evils to be that the vice predisposes men to unpatriotic acts. "Nullam capitaliorem pestem quam corporis voluptatem, hominibus a natura datam. Hinc patrum proditores, hinc rerum publicarum eversiones, hinc cum hostibus clandestina colloquia nasci," etc. (Cicero, *De Senect.* xii.)

² Diog. Laërt. *Anax.*

¹ Seneca, *Præf. Nat. Quæst.* iii.

² Marc. Aur. x. 25.

³ Epict. *Ench.* xi.

⁴ *Ibid.* iv.

⁵ Epict. *Ench.* xvii.

⁶ Seneca, *De Prov.* i.

⁷ Marc. Aurel. ii. 2, 3.

⁸ The language in which the Stoics sometimes spoke of the inexorable determination of all things by Providence would appear logically inconsistent with free-will. In fact, however, the Stoics asserted the latter doctrine in unequivocal language, and in their practical ethics even exaggerated its power. Aulus Gellus (*Noct. Att.* vi. 2) has preserved a passage in which

were diametrically opposed to the prevailing tone. Patriotism was represented as a moral duty, and a duty of the highest order. Cicero only echoed the common opinion of antiquity in that noble passage in which he asserts that the love we owe our country is even holier and more profound than that we owe our nearest kinsman, and that he can have no claim to the title of a good man who even hesitates to die in its behalf.¹

A necessary consequence of this prominence of patriotism was the practical character of most ancient ethics. We find, indeed, moralists often exhorting men to moderate their ambition, consoling them under political adversity, and urging that there are some circumstances under which an upright man should for a time withdraw from public affairs;² but the general duty of taking part in political life was emphatically asserted, and the vanity of the quietist theory of life not only maintained, but even somewhat exaggerated. Thus Cicero declared that "all virtue is in action."³ The younger Pliny mentions that he once lamented to the Stoic Euphrates the small place which his official duties left for philosophical pursuits; but Euphrates answered that the discharge of public affairs and the administration of justice formed a part, and the most important part, of philosophy, for he who is so engaged is but practising the precepts of the schools.⁴ It was a fundamental maxim of the Stoics that humanity is a body in which each limb should act solely and continually with a view to the interests of the whole. Marcus Aurelius, the purest mind of the sect, was for nineteen years the active ruler of the civilised globe. Thræsea, Helvidius, Cornutus, and a crowd of others who had adopted Stoicism as a religion, lived, and in many cases died, in obedience to its precepts, struggling for the liberties of their country in the darkest hours of tyranny.

Men who had formed such high conceptions of duty, who had bridled so completely the tumult of passion, and

whose lives were spent in a calm sense of virtue and of dignity, were little likely to be assailed by the superstitious fears that are the nightmare of weaker men. The preparation for death was deemed one of the chief ends of philosophy.⁵ The thought of a coming change assisted the mind in detaching itself from the gifts of fortune, and the extinction of all superstitious terrors completed the type of self-reliant majesty which Stoicism had chosen for its ideal. But while it is certain that no philosophers expatiated upon death with a grander eloquence, or met it with a more placid courage, it can hardly be denied that their constant disquisitions forced it into an unhealthy prominence, and somewhat discoloured their whole view of life. "The Stoics," as Bacon has said, "bestowed too much cost on death, and by their preparations made it more fearful."⁶ There is a profound wisdom in the maxims of Spinoza, that "the proper study of a wise man is not how to die, but how to live," and that "there is no subject on which the sage will think less than death."⁷ A life of active duty is the best preparation for the end, and so large a part of the evil of death lies in its anticipation that an attempt to deprive it of its terrors by constant meditation almost necessarily defeats its object, while at the same time it forms an unnaturally tense, feverish, and tragical character, annihilates the ambition and enthusiasm that are essential to human progress, and not unfrequently casts a chill and a deadness over the affections.

Among the many half-pagan legends that were connected with Ireland during the Middle Ages, one of the most beautiful is that of the islands of life and of death. In a certain lake in Munster it is said there were two islands: into the first death could never enter, but age and sickness, and the weariness of life, and the paroxysms of fearful suffering were all known there; and they did their work till the inhabitants, tired of their immortality, learned to look upon the opposite island as upon a haven of repose; they launched their barks upon the gloomy waters; they touched its shore, and they were at rest.⁸

¹ "Cari sunt parentes, cari liberi, propinqui, familiares; sed omnes omnium caritates patria una complexa est; pro qua quis bonus dubitet mortem oppetere si ei sit profuturus?" (*De Offic.* i. 17.)

² See Seneca, *Consol. ad Helviam* and *De Otio Sapient.*; and Plutarch, *De Exilio*. The first of these works is the basis of one of the most beautiful compositions in the English language, Bolingbroke's *Reflections on Exile*.

³ *De Officiis*.

⁴ *Epist.* i. 10.

⁵ "Tota enim philosophorum vita, ut ait idem, commentatio mortis est." (Cicero, *Tusc.* i. 30, *ad fin.*)

⁶ *Essay on Death*.

⁷ Spinoza, *Ethics*, iv. 67.

⁸ Camden. Montalembert notices a similar legend as existing in Brittany (*Les Mores d'Occident*, tome ii. p. 287). Procopius (*De Bello Goth.* ii. 20) says that it

This legend, which is far more akin to the spirit of Paganism than to that of Christianity, and is in fact only another form of the myth of Tithonus, represents with great fidelity the aspect in which death was regarded by the exponents of Stoicism. There was much difference of opinion and of certitude in the judgments of the ancient philosophers concerning the future destinies of the soul, but they were unanimous in regarding death simply as a natural rest, and in attributing the terrors that were connected with it to a diseased imagination. Death, they said, is the only evil that does not afflict us when present. While we are, death is not; when death has come, we are not. It is a false belief that it only follows, it also precedes, life. It is to be as we were before we were born. The candle which has been extinguished is in the same condition as before it was lit, and the dead man as the man unborn. Death is the end of all sorrow. It either secures happiness or ends suffering. It frees the slave from his cruel master, opens the prison door, calms the qualms of pain, closes the struggles of poverty. It is the last and best boon of nature, for it frees man from all his cares. It is at worst but the close of a banquet we have enjoyed. Whether it be desired or whether it be shunned, it is no curse and no evil, but simply the resolution of our being into its primitive elements, the law of our nature to which it is our duty cheerfully to conform.

Such were the leading topics that were employed in that beautiful literature of *Consolations* which the academic Crantor is said to have originated, and which occupies so large a place in the writings of Cicero, Plutarch, and the Stoics. Cicero, like all the school of Plato, added to these motives a very firm and constant reference to the immortality of the soul. Plutarch held the same doctrine with equal assurance; but he gave it a much less conspicuous position in his *Consolations*, and he based it not upon philosophical grounds, but upon the testimonies of the oracles and upon the mysteries of Bacchus.² Among the Stoics the doctrine shone with a faint and uncertain light, and was seldom or

never adopted as a motive. But that which is most impressive to a student who turns from the religious literature of Christianity to the pagan philosophies is the complete absence in the latter of all notion concerning the penal character of death. Death, according to Socrates,¹ either extinguishes life or emancipates it from the thralldom of the body. Even in the first case it is a blessing—in the last it is the greatest of boons. "Accustom yourself," said Epicurus, "to the thought that death is indifferent; for all good and all evil consist in feeling, and what is death but the privation of feeling?"² "Souls either remain after death," says Cicero, "or they perish in death. If they remain, they are happy; if they perish, they are not wretched."³ Seneca, consoling Polybius concerning the death of his brother, exhorts his friend to think, "if the dead have any sensations, then my brother, let loose as it were from a life-long prison, and at last enjoying his liberty, looks down from a loftier height on the wonders of nature and on all the deeds of men, and sees more clearly those divine things which he had so long sought in vain to understand. But why should I be afflicted for one who is either happy or is nothing? To lament the fate of one who is happy is envy; to lament the fate of a nonentity is madness."⁴

But while the Greek and Roman philosophers were on this point unanimous, there was a strong opposing current in the popular mind. The Greek word for superstition signifies literally fear of gods or dæmons; and the philosophers sometimes represent the vulgar as shuddering at the thought of death, through dread of certain endless sufferings to which it would lead them. The Greek mythology contains many fables on the subject. Some South Italian vases represent scenes of infernal torments not unlike those of the mediæval frescoes.⁵ The rapture with

is impossible for men to live in the west of Britain, and that the district is believed to be inhabited by the souls of the dead.

² In his *De Sera Numinus Vindicta* and his *Consolatio ad Uxorem*.

¹ In the *Phædo*, *passim*. See, too, Marc. Aurelius, *ii. 12*.

² See a very striking letter of Epicurus quoted by Diogenes Laert., in his life of that philosopher. Except a few sentences, quoted by other writers, these letters were all that remained of the works of Epicurus, till the recent discovery of one of his treatises at Herculaneum.

³ *Tusc. Quæst. i.*

⁴ *Consol. ad Polyb. xxvii.*

⁵ Maury, *Hist. des Religions de la Grèce antique*, tom. i pp. 582-588. M. Ravaisson, in his *Memoir on Stoicism* (*Acad. des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres*, tom. xxi.), has enlarged on the terrorism of paganism, but has, I think, exaggerated it. Religions which selected games as the natural form of devotion can never have had any very alarming character.

which Epicureanism was received, as liberating the human mind from the thralldom of superstitious terrors, shows how gallant must have been the yoke. In the poem of Lucretius, in occasional passages of Cicero and other Latin moralists—above all, in the treatise of Plutarch *On Superstition*—we may trace the deep impression these terrors had made upon the populace, even during the later period of the Republic and during the Empire. To destroy them was represented as the highest function of philosophy. Plutarch denounced them as the worst calumny against the Deity, as more pernicious than atheism, as the evil consequences of immoral fables, and he gladly turned to other legends which taught a different lesson. Thus it was related that when, during a certain festival at Argos, the horses that were to draw the statue of Juno to the temple were detained, the sons of the priestess yoked themselves to the car, and their mother, admiring their piety, prayed the goddess to reward them with whatever boon was the best for man. Her prayer was answered—they sank asleep and died.¹ In like manner the architects of the great temple of Apollo, at Delphi, prayed the god to select that reward which was best. The oracle told them in reply to spend seven days in rejoicing, and on the following night their reward would come. They, too, died in sleep.² The swan was consecrated to Apollo because its dying song was believed to spring from a prophetic impulse.³ The Spanish Celts raised temples and sang hymns of praise to death.⁴ No philosopher of antiquity ever questioned that a good man, reviewing his life, might look upon it without shame and even with positive complacency, or that the reverence with which men regard heroic deaths is a foretaste of the sentence of the Creator. To this confidence may be traced the tranquil courage, the complete absence of all remorse, so conspicuous in the closing hours of Socrates and of many other of the sages of

antiquity. There is no fact in religious history more startling than the radical change that has in this respect passed over the character of devotion. It is said of Chilon, one of the seven sages of Greece, that at the close of his career he gathered his disciples around him, and congratulated himself that in a long life he could recall but a single act that saddened his dying hour. It was that, in a perplexing dilemma, he had allowed his love of a friend in some slight degree to obscure his sense of justice.⁵ The writings of Cicero in his old age are full of passionate aspirations to a future world, unclouded by one regret or by one fear. Seneca died tranquilly, bequeathing to his friends "the most precious of his possessions, the image of his life."⁶ Titus on his deathbed declared that he could remember only a single act with which to reproach himself.⁷ On the last night in which Antoninus Pius lived the tribune came to ask for the pass-word of the night. The dying emperor gave him "æquanimitas."⁸ Julian, the last great representative of his expiring creed, caught up the same majestic strain. Amid the curses of angry priests and the impending ruin of the cause he loved, he calmly died in the consciousness of his virtue; and his death, which is among the most fearless that antiquity records, was the last protest of philosophic paganism against the new doctrine that had arisen.⁹

It is customary with some writers, when exhibiting the many points in which the ancient philosophers anticipated Christian ethics, to represent Christianity as if it were merely a development or authoritative confirmation of the highest teaching of paganism, or as if the additions were at least of such a nature that there is but little doubt that the best and purest spirits of the pagan world, had they known them, would have gladly welcomed them. But this conception, which contains a large amount of truth if applied to the teaching of many Protestants, is either grossly exaggerated or absolutely false if applied

¹ Plutarch, *Ad Apollonium*.

² *Ibid.* ³ Cic. *Tusc. Quest.* i.

⁴ Philost. *Apoll.* of Tyan. v. 4. Hence their passion for suicide, which Silius Italicus commemorates in lines which I think very beautiful:—

"Prodiga gens animæ et prope rare facillima mortem;
Namque ubi transcendit florescentes viribus annos
Impatens ævi, spernit novæ senectam
Et fati modus in dextra est." — 225-228.

Valerius Maximus (ii. vi. § 12) speaks of Celts who celebrated the birth of men with lamentation, and their deaths with joy.

⁵ Aulus Gellus, *Noctes*, i. 3.

⁶ Tacitus, *Annales*, xiv. 62.

⁷ Sueton. *Titus*, 10.

⁸ Capitolinus, *Antoninus*.

⁹ See the beautiful account of his last hours given by Ammianus Marcellinus and reproduced by Gibbon. There are some remarks well worth reading about the death of Julian and the state of thought that rendered such a death possible in Dr. Newman's *Discourses on University Education*, lect. ix.

to that of the patristic period or of mediæval Catholicism. On the very subject which the philosophers deemed the most important their unanimous conclusion was the extreme antithesis of the teaching of Catholicism. The philosophers taught that death is "a law and not a punishment";¹ the Fathers taught that it is a penal infliction introduced into the world on account of the sin of Adam, which was also the cause of the appearance of all noxious plants, of all convulsions in the material globe, and, as was sometimes asserted, even of a diminution of the light of the sun. The first taught that death was the end of suffering; they ridiculed as the extreme of folly the notion that physical evils could await those whose bodies had been reduced to ashes, and they dwelt with emphatic eloquence upon the approaching, and, as they believed, final extinction of superstitious terrors. The second taught that death to the vast majority of the human race is but the beginning of endless and excruciating tortures—tortures before which the most ghastly of terrestrial sufferings dwindle into insignificance—tortures which no courage could defy—which none but an immortal being could endure. The first represented man as pure and innocent until his will had sinned; the second represented him as under a sentence of condemnation at the very moment of his birth. "No funeral sacrifices," said a great writer of the first school, "are offered for children who die at an early age, and none of the ceremonies practised at the funerals of adults are performed at their tombs, for it is believed that infants have no hold upon earth or upon terrestrial affections..... The law forbids us to honour them because it is irreligious to lament for those pure souls who have passed into a better life and a happier dwelling-place."² "Whosoever shall tell us," said a distinguished exponent of the patristic theology, "that infants shall be quickened in Christ who die without partaking in His Sacrament, does both contradict the Apostle's teaching and condemn the whole Church..... And he that is not quickened in Christ must remain in that condemna-

tion of which the Apostle speaks, 'by one man's offence condemnation came upon all men to condemnation.' To which condemnation infants are born liable, as all the Church believes."³ The one school endeavoured to plant its foundations in the moral nature of mankind, by proclaiming that man can become acceptable to the Deity by his own virtue, and by this alone; that all sacrifices, rites, and forms are indifferent, and that the true worship of God is the recognition and imitation of His goodness. According to the other school, the most heroic efforts of human virtue are insufficient to avert a sentence of eternal condemnation, unless united with an implicit belief in the teachings of the Church and a due observance of the rites it enjoins. By the philosophers the ascription of anger and vengeance to the Deity, and the apprehension of future torture at His hands, were unanimously repudiated;⁴ by the priests the opposite opinion was deemed equally censurable.⁵

These are fundamental points of difference, for they relate to the fundamental principles of the ancient philosophy. The main object of the pagan philosophers was to dispel the terrors the imagination had cast around death, and by destroying this last cause of fear to secure the liberty of man. The main object of the Catholic priests has been to make death in itself as revolting and appalling as possible, and by representing escape from its terrors as hopeless, except by complete subjection to their rule, to convert it into an instrument of government. By multiplying the dancing or warning skeletons and other sepulchral images representing the loathsomeness of death without its repose; by substituting inhumation for incineration, and concentrating the imagination on the ghastliness of decay; above all, by peopling the unseen world with demon phantoms and with excruciating tortures, the Catholic Church succeeded in making death in itself unspeakably terrible, and in thus preparing men for the consolations it could offer. Its legends, its ceremonies, its art,⁶ its dog-

¹ St Augustine, *Epist.* 166.

² "At hoc quidem commune est omnium philosophorum, non eorum modo qui deum nihil habere ipsum negotii dicunt, et nihil exhibere alteri; sed eorum etiam, qui deum semper agere aliquid et noliri volunt, numquam nec irasci deum nec nocere." (Cic. *De Offic.* iii. 28.)

³ See the refutation of the philosophic notion in Lactantius, *De Ira Dei*.

⁴ "Revelation," as Lessing observes in his essay on this subject, "has made Death the 'king of terrors,'

¹ "Lex non poena mors" was a favourite saying among the ancients. On the other hand, Tertullian very distinctly enunciated the patristic view. "Qui autem primordia hominis novimus, audent determinare mortem non ex natura secutam hominem sed ex culpa." (*De Anima*, 52.)

² Plutarch, *Ad Uxorem*.

matic teaching, all conspired to this end, and the history of its miracles is a striking evidence of its success. The great majority of superstitions have ever clustered around two centres—the fear of death and the belief that every phenomenon of life is the result of a special spiritual interposition. Among the ancients they were usually of the latter kind. Auguries, prophecies, interventions in war, prodigies avenging the neglect of some rite or marking some epoch in the fortunes of a nation or of a ruler, are the forms they usually assumed. In the Middle Ages, although these were very common, the most conspicuous superstitions took the form of visions of purgatory or hell, conflicts with visible demons, or Satanic miracles. Like those mothers who govern their children by persuading them that the dark is crowded with spectres that will seize the disobedient, and who often succeed in creating an association of ideas which the adult man is unable altogether to dissolve, the Catholic priests resolved to base their power upon the nerves; and as they long exercised an absolute control over education, literature, and art, they succeeded in completely reversing the teaching of ancient philosophy, and in making the terrors of death for centuries the nightmare of the imagination.

There is, indeed, another side to the picture. The vague uncertainty with which the best pagans regarded death passed away before the teaching of the Church, and it was often replaced by a rapture of hope, which, however, the doctrine of purgatory contributed at a later period largely to quell. But, whatever may be thought of the justice of the Catholic conception of death or of its influence upon human happiness, it is plain that it is radically different from that of the pagan philosophers. That man is not only an imperfect but a fallen being, and that death is the penal consequence of his sin, was a doctrine profoundly new to mankind, and it has exercised an influence of the most serious character upon the moral history of the world.

The wide divergence of the classical from the Catholic conception of death

appears very plainly in the attitude which each system adopted towards suicide. This is, perhaps, the most striking of all the points of contrast between the teaching of antiquity, and especially of the Roman Stoics, on the one hand, and that of almost all modern moralists on the other. It is indeed true that the ancients were by no means unanimous in their approval of the act. Pythagoras, to whom so many of the wisest sayings of antiquity are ascribed, is said to have forbidden men "to depart from their guard or station in life without the order of their commander—that is, of God."¹ Plato adopted similar language, though he permitted suicide when the law required it, and also when men had been struck down by intolerable calamity, or had sunk to the lowest depths of poverty.² Aristotle condemned it on civic grounds, as being an injury to the State.³ The roll of Greek suicides is not long, though it contains some illustrious names, among others those of Zeno and Cleanthes.⁴ In Rome, too, where suicide acquired a greater prominence, its lawfulness was by no means accepted as an axiom, and the story of Regulus, whether it be a history or a legend, shows that the patient endurance of suffering was once the supreme ideal.⁵ Virgil painted in gloomy colours the condition of suicides in the future world.⁶ Cicero strongly asserted the doctrine of Pythagoras, though he praised the suicide of Cato.⁷ Apuleius, expounding the philosophy of Plato, taught that "the wise man never throws off his body except by the will of

¹ "Vetat Pythagoras injussu imperatoris, id est Dei, de presidio et statione vitæ decedere." (Cic. *De Senectute* xx.) If we believe the very untrustworthy evidence of Diog. Laërtius (*Pythagoras*), the philosopher himself committed suicide by starvation.

² See his *Laws*, lib. ix. In his *Phædon*, however, Plato went farther, and condemned all suicide. Ithurius says (*De Vita Sua*) that the arguments of the *Phædon* prevented him from committing suicide after the death of Julian. On the other hand, Cicero mentions a certain Cleombrotus, who was so fascinated by the proof of the immortality of the soul in the *Phædon* that he forthwith cast himself into the sea. Cato, as is well known, chose this work to study the night he committed suicide.

³ Arist. *Ethic.* v.

⁴ See a list of these in Lactantius' *Inst. Div.* iii. 18. Many of these instances rest on very doubtful evidence.

⁵ Adam Smith's *Moral Sentiments*, part vii. § 2.

⁶ "Proxima deinde tenent mœsti loca qui ubi lethum Insontes peperere manu, lucemque perosi Projecere animas. Quam vellent æthere in alto Nunc et pauperiem et duros perferre labores."

—*Æneid*, vi. 434-437.

⁷ Cicero has censured suicide in his *De Senectute*, in the *Somn. Scipionis*, and in the *Tusculans*. Concerning the death of Cato, he says, that the occasion was such as to constitute a divine call to leave life. (*Tusc. l.*)

the awful offspring of sin and the dread way to its punishment; though to the imagination of the ancient heathen world, Greek or Etrurian, he was a youthful genius—the twin brother of Sleep, or a lusty boy with a torch held downwards." (Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, cap. xxii., note by Sara Coleridge.)

God."¹ Caesar, Ovid, and others, urged that in extreme distress it is easy to despise life, and that true courage is shown in enduring it.² Among the Stoics themselves, the belief that no man may shrink from a duty co-existed with the belief that every man has a right to dispose of his own life. Seneca, who emphatically advocated suicide, admits that there were some who deemed it wrong, and he himself attempted to moderate what he termed "the passion for suicide" that had arisen among his disciples.³ Marcus Aurelius wavers a little on the subject, sometimes asserting the right of every man to leave life when he pleases, sometimes inclining to the Platonic doctrine that man is a soldier of God, occupying a post which it is criminal to abandon.⁴ Plotinus and Porphyry argued strongly against all suicide.⁵

But, notwithstanding these passages, there can be no question that the ancient view of suicide was broadly and strongly opposed to our own. A general approval of it floated down through most of the schools of philosophy, and even to those who condemned it, it never seems to have assumed its present aspect of extreme

enormity. This was in the first instance due to the ancient notion of death; and we have also to remember that when a society once learns to tolerate suicide, the deed, in ceasing to be disgraceful, loses much of its actual criminality, for those who are most firmly convinced that the stigma and suffering it now brings upon the family of the deceased do not constitute its entire guilt, will readily acknowledge that they greatly aggravate it. In the conditions of ancient thought this aggravation did not exist. Epicurus exhorted men "to weigh carefully whether they would prefer death to come to them, or would themselves go to death";¹ and among his disciples Lucretius, the illustrious poet of the sect, died by his own hand,² as did also Cassius the tyrannicide, Atticus the friend of Cicero,³ the voluptuary Petronius,⁴ and the philosopher Diodorus.⁵ Pliny described the lot of man as in this respect at least superior to that of God, that man has the power of flying to the tomb,⁶ and he represented it as one of the greatest proofs of the bounty of Providence, that it has filled the world with herbs, by which the weary may find a rapid and a painless death.⁷ One of the most striking figures that a passing

¹ Apuleius, *De Philo* Plat. lib. 1.

² Thus Ovid:—

"Rebus in adversis facile est contemnere vitam,
Fortiter ille facit qui miser esse potest."

See, too, Martial, xi. 56.

³ Especially *Ep.* xxiv. Seneca desires that men should not commit suicide with panic or trepidation. He says that those condemned to death should await their execution, for "it is a folly to die through fear of death"; and he recommends men to support old age as long as their faculties remain unimpaired. On this last point, however, his language is somewhat contradictory. There is a good review of the opinions of the ancients in general, and of Seneca in particular, on this subject in Justus Lipsius' *Manuductio ad Stoicam Philosophiam*, lib. iii. dissert. 22, 23, from which I have borrowed much.

⁴ In his *Meditations*, ix. 3, he speaks of the duty of patiently awaiting death. But in iii. 1, x. 8, 22-32, he clearly recognises the right of suicide in some cases, especially to prevent moral degeneracy. It must be remembered that the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius were private notes for his personal guidance, that all the Stoics admitted it to be wrong to commit suicide in cases where the act would be an injury to society, and that this consideration in itself would be sufficient to divert an emperor from the deed. Antoninus, the uncle, predecessor, and model of M. Aurelius, had considered it his duty several times to prevent Hadrian from committing suicide (Spartianus, *Hadrianus*). According to Capitoinus, Marcus Aurelius in his last illness purposely accelerated his death by abstinence. The duty of not hastily, or through cowardice, abandoning a path of duty, and the right of man to quit life when it appears intolerable, are combined very clearly by Epictetus *Arran.* i. 9; and the latter is asserted in the strongest manner, i. 24-25.

⁵ Porphyry, *De Abst. Carnis.* ii. 47; Plotinus, 1st Enn. ix. Porphyry says (*Life of Plotinus*) that Plotinus dissuaded him from suicide. There is a good epitome of the arguments of this school against suicide in Macrobius, *In Som. Scip.* 1.

¹ Quoted by Seneca, *Ep.* xxvi. Cicero states the Epicurean doctrine to be. "Ut si tolerabiles sint dolores, feramus, sin minus seque animo e vita, cum ea non placet, tanquam e theatro, exeamus" (*De Finib.* i. 15); and again: "De his immortalibus sine ullo metu vera sentit. Non dubitat, si ita melius sit, de vita migrare" (*Id.* i. 19).

² This is noticed by St. Jerome.

³ Corn. Nepos, *Atticus*. He killed himself when an old man, to shorten a hopeless disease.

⁴ Petronius, who was called the arbitrator of tastes ("elegantiae arbiter"), was one of the most famous voluptuaries of the reign of Nero. Unlike most of his contemporaries, however, he was endowed with the most exquisite and refined taste; his graceful manners fascinated all about him, and made him a matter of pleasure to the ruler of the Court. Appointed Proconsul of Bithynia, and afterwards Consul, he displayed the energies and the abilities of a statesman. A Court intrigue threw him out of favour; and, believing that his death was resolved on, he determined to anticipate it by suicide. Calling his friends about him, he opened his veins, shut them, and opened them again; prolonged his lingering death till he had arranged his affairs; discoursed in his last moments, not about the immortality of the soul or the dogmas of philosophers, but about the gay songs and epigrams of the hour; and, partaking of a cheerful banquet, died as recklessly as he had lived. (Tacit. *Annal.* xvi. 18-19.) It has been a matter of much dispute whether or not this Petronius was the author of the *Satyricon*, one of the most licentious and repulsive works in Latin literature.

⁵ Seneca, *De Vita Beata*, xix.

⁶ "Imperfectæ vero in homine naturæ præcipua solatia, ne Deum quidem posse omnia; namque nec sibi potest mortem consciscere si velit, quod homini dedit optimum in tantis vitæ penis." (*Hist. Nat.* ii. 5.)

⁷ *Hist. Nat.* ii. 63. We need not be surprised at this writer thus speaking of sudden death: "Mortis repentinæ (hoc est summa vitæ felicitas)" (vii. 54).

notice of Cicero brings before us is that of Hegesias, who was surnamed by the ancients "the orator of death." A conspicuous member of that Cyrenaic school which esteemed the pursuit of pleasure the sole end of a rational being, he taught that life was so full of cares, and its pleasure so fleeting and so alloyed, that the happiest lot for man was death; and such was the power of his eloquence, so intense was the fascination he cast around the tomb, that his disciples embraced with rapture the consequences of his doctrine, multitudes freed themselves by suicide from the troubles of the world, and the contagion was so great that Ptolemy, it is said, was compelled to banish the philosopher from Alexandria.¹

But it was in the Roman Empire and among the Roman Stoics that suicide assumed its greatest prominence, and its philosophy was most fully elaborated. From an early period self-immolation, like that of Curtius or Decius, had been esteemed in some circumstances a religious rite, being, as has been well suggested, probably a lingering remnant of the custom of human sacrifices,² and towards the closing days of paganism many influences conspired in the same direction. The example of Cato, who had become the ideal of the Stoics, and whose dramatic suicide was the favourite subject of their eloquence;³ the indifference to death produced by the great multiplication of gladiatorial shows, the many instances of barbarian captives, who, sooner than slay their fellow-countrymen, or minister to the pleasures of their conquerors, plunged their lances into their own necks, or found other and still more horrible roads to freedom;⁴ the custom of compelling political prisoners to execute their own sentence, and, more than all, the capricious and atrocious tyranny of the Cæsars,⁵ had raised suicide into an extraordinary prominence. Few things are more touching than the passionate

joy with which, in the reign of Nero, Seneca clung to it as the one refuge for the oppressed, the last bulwark of the tottering mind. "To death alone it is due that life is not a punishment; that, erect beneath the frowns of fortune, I can preserve my mind unshaken and master of itself. I have one to whom I can appeal. I see before me the crosses of many forms.....I see the rack and the scourge, and the instruments of torture adapted to every limb and to every nerve; but I also see Death. She stands beyond my savage enemies, beyond my haughty fellow-countrymen. Slavery loses its bitterness when by a step I can pass to liberty. Against all the injuries of life I have the refuge of death."⁶ "Wherever you look, there is the end of evils. You see that yawning precipice—there you may descend to liberty. You see that sea, that river, that well—liberty sits at the bottom.... Do you seek the way to freedom?—you may find it in every vein of your body."⁷ "If I can choose between a death of torture and one that is simple and easy, why should not I select the latter? As I choose the ship in which I will sail, and the house I will inhabit, so I will choose the death by which I will leave life.... In no matter more than in death should we act according to our desire. Depart from life as your impulse leads you, whether it be by the sword, or the rope, or the poison creeping through the veins; go your way and break the chains of slavery. Man should seek the approbation of others in his life; his death concerns himself alone. That is the best which pleases him most.....The eternal law has decreed nothing better than this, that life should have but one entrance and many exits. Why should I endure the agonies of disease and the cruelties of human tyranny when I can emancipate myself from all my torments and shake off every bond? For this reason, but for this alone, life is not an evil—that no one is obliged to live. The lot of man is happy, because no one continues wretched but by his fault. If life pleases you, live. If not, you have a right to return whence you came."⁸

These passages, which are but a few selected out of very many, will sufficiently show the passion with which the most influential teacher of Roman Stoicism

¹ *Tusc. Quæst.* lib. i. Another remarkable example of an epidemic of suicide occurred among the young girls of Miletus. (Aul. Gell. xv. 10.)

² Sir Cornwall Lewis, *On the Credibility of Early Roman History*, vol. ii p. 430. See, too, on this class of suicides, Cromaziano, *Istoria Critica del Suicidio* (Venezia, 1788), pp. 81–82. The real name of the author of this book (which is, I think, the best history of suicide) was Buonafede. He was a Celestine monk. The book was first published at Lucca in 1761. It was translated into French in 1841.

³ Senec. *De Prov.* ii. ; *Ep.* xxiv.

⁴ See some examples of this in Seneca, *Ep.* lxx.

⁵ See a long catalogue of suicides arising from this cause, in Cromaziano, *Ist. del Suicidio*, pp. 112–114.

⁶ *Consol. ad Marc. c. xx.*

⁷ *De Ira*, iii. 15.

⁸ *Ep.* lxx.

advocated suicide. As a general proposition the law recognised it as a right, but two slight restrictions were after a time imposed.¹ It had become customary with many men who were accused of political offences to commit suicide before trial, in order to prevent the ignominious exposure of their bodies and the confiscation of their goods; but Domitian closed this resource by ordaining that the suicide of an accused person should entail the same consequences as his condemnation. Hadrian afterwards assimilated the suicide of a Roman soldier to desertion.² With these exceptions, the liberty appears to have been absolute, and the act was committed under the most various motives. The suicide of Otho, who is said to have killed himself to avoid being a second time a cause of civil war, was extolled as equal in grandeur to that of Cato.³ In the Dacian war the enemy, having captured a distinguished Roman general named Longinus, endeavoured to extort terms from Trajan as a condition of his surrender; but Longinus, by taking poison, freed the Emperor from his em-

barrassment.⁴ On the death of Otho some of his soldiers, filled with grief and admiration, killed themselves before his corpse,⁵ as did also a freedman of Agrippina at the funeral of the Empress.⁶ Before the close of the Republic an enthusiastic partisan of one of the factions in the chariot races flung himself upon the pile on which the body of a favourite coachman was consumed and perished in the flames.⁷ A Roman, unmenaced in his fortune and standing high in the favour of his sovereign, killed himself under Tiberius because he could not endure to witness the crimes of the Empire.⁸ Another, being afflicted by an incurable malady, postponed his suicide till the death of Domitian, that at least he might die free, and on the assassination of the tyrant hastened cheerfully to the tomb.⁹ The Cynic Peregrinus announced that, being weary of life, he would on a certain day depart, and, in presence of a large concourse, he mounted the funeral pile.¹⁰ Most frequently, however, death was regarded as "the last physician of disease,"¹¹ and suicide as the legitimate relief from intolerable suffering. "Above all things," said Epictetus, "remember that the door is open. Be not more timid than boys at play. As they, when they cease to take pleasure in their games, declare they will no longer play, so do you, when all things begin to pall upon you, retire; but if you stay, do not complain."¹² Seneca declared that he who waits the extremity of old age is not "far removed from a coward," "as he is justly regarded as too much addicted to wine who drains the flask to the very dregs." "I will not relinquish old age," he added, "if it leaves my better part intact. But if it begins to shake my mind, if it destroys its faculties one by one, if it leaves me not life but breath, I will depart from the putrid or tottering edifice. I will not escape by death from disease so long as it may be healed, and leaves my mind unimpaired. I will not raise my hand against myself on account of pain,

¹ See Donne's *Biathanatos* (London, 1700), pp. 56-57. Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, ch. xlv. Blackstone, in his chapter on suicide, quotes the sentence of the Roman lawyers on the subject: "Si quis impatientia doloris aut tedio vitæ aut morbo aut furore aut pudore mori maluit non animadvertatur in eum." Ulpian expressly asserts that the wills of suicides were recognised by law, and numerous examples of the act, notoriously prepared and publicly and gradually accomplished, prove its legality in Rome. Suetonius, it is true, speaks of Claudius accusing a man for having tried to kill himself (Claud. xvi.), and Xiphilin says (lxi. 8) that Hadrian gave special permission to the philosopher Euphrates to commit suicide, "on account of old age and disease"; but in the first case it appears from the context that a reproach and not a legal action was meant; while Euphrates, I suppose, asked permission to show his loyalty to the emperor, and not as a matter of strict necessity. There were, however, some Greek laws condemning suicide, probably on civic grounds. Josephus mentions (*De Bell. Jud.* iii. 8) that in some nations "the right hand of the suicide was amputated, and that in Judea the suicide was only buried after sunset." A very strange law, said to have been derived from Greece, is reported to have existed at Marseilles. Poison was kept by the senate of the city, and given to those who could prove that they had sufficient reason to justify their desire for death, and all other suicide was forbidden. The law was intended, it was said, to prevent hasty suicide, and to make deliberate suicide as rapid and painless as possible. (Valer. Maximus, ii. 6, § 7.) In the Reign of Terror in France a law was made similar to that of Domitian. (Carlyle's *Hist. of the French Revolution*, book v. c. ii.)

² Compare with this a curious "order of the day," issued by Napoleon in 1802, with the view of checking the prevalence of suicide among his soldiers. (Lisle, *Du Suicide*, pp. 462-463.)

³ See Suetonius, *Otho*, c. x.-xi., and the very fine description in Tacitus, *Hist.* lib. ii. c. 47-49. Martial compares the death of Otho to that of Cato.—

"Sit Cato, dum vivit, sane vel Cæsare major;
Dum moritur, numquid major Othone fuit?"

—*Ep.* vi. 32.

⁴ Xiphilin, lxxvii. 12.

⁵ Tacit *Hist.* ii. 49. Suet. *Otho*, 12. Suetonius says that, in addition to these, many soldiers who were not present killed themselves on hearing the news.

⁶ *Ibid.* *Annal.* xiv. 9.

⁷ Plin. *Hist. Nat.* vii. 54. The opposite faction attributed this suicide to the maddening effects of the perfumes burnt on the pile.

⁸ Tacit *Annal.* vi. 26.

⁹ This history is satirically and unfeelingly told by Lucian. See, too, Ammianus Marcellinus, xxix. 1.

¹⁰ Sophocles.

¹¹ Arrian, i. 24.

for so to die is to be conquered. But if I know that I must suffer without hope of relief I will depart, not through fear of the pain itself, but because it prevents all for which I would live."¹ "Just as a landlord," said Musonius, "who has not received his rent pulls down the doors, removes the rafters, and fills up the well, so I seem to be driven out of this little body when nature, which has let it to me, takes away, one by one, eyes and ears, hands and feet. I will not, therefore, delay longer, but will cheerfully depart as from a banquet."²

This conception of suicide as an euthanasia, an abridgment of the pangs of disease, and a guarantee against the dotage of age, was not confined to philosophical treatises. We have considerable evidence of its being frequently put in practice. Among those who thus abridged their lives was Silius Italicus, one of the last of the Latin poets.³ The younger Pliny describes in terms of the most glowing admiration the conduct of one of his friends who, struck down by disease, resolved calmly and deliberately upon the path he should pursue. He determined, if the disease was only dangerous and long, to yield to the wishes of his friends and await the struggle; but, if the issue was hopeless, to die by his own hand. Having reasoned on the propriety of this course with all the tranquil courage of a Roman, he summoned a council of physicians, and, with a mind indifferent to either fate, he calmly awaited their sentence.⁴ The same writer mentions the case of a man who was afflicted with a horrible disease, which reduced his body to a mass of sores. His wife, being convinced that it was incurable, exhorted her husband to shorten his sufferings; she nerved and encouraged him to the effort, and she claimed it as her privilege to accompany him to the grave. Husband and wife, bound together, plunged into a lake.⁵ Seneca, in one of his letters, has

left us a detailed description of the deathbed of one of the Roman suicides. Tullius Marcellinus, a young man of remarkable abilities and very earnest character, who had long ridiculed the teachings of philosophy, but had ended by embracing it with all the passion of a convert, being afflicted with a grave and lingering though not incurable disease, resolved at length upon suicide. He gathered his friends around him, and many of them entreated him to continue in life. Among them, however, was one Stoical philosopher, who addressed him in what Seneca terms the very noblest of discourses. He exhorted him not to lay too much stress upon the question he was deciding, as if existence was a matter of great importance. He urged that life is a thing we possess in common with slaves and animals, but that a noble death should indeed be prized, and he concluded by recommending suicide. Marcellinus gladly embraced the counsel which his own wishes had anticipated. According to the advice of his friend, he distributed gifts among his faithful slaves, consoled them on their approaching bereavement, abstained during three days from all food, and at last, when his strength had been wholly exhausted, passed into a warm bath and calmly died, describing with his last breath the pleasing sensations that accompanied receding life.⁶

The doctrine of suicide was, indeed, the culminating point of Roman Stoicism. The proud, self-reliant, unbending character of the philosopher could only be sustained when he felt that he had a sure refuge against the extreme forms of suffering or of despair. Although virtue is not a mere creature of interest, no great system has ever yet flourished which did not present an ideal of happiness as well as an ideal of duty. Stoicism taught men to hope little, but to fear nothing. It did not array death in brilliant colours as the path to positive felicity, but it endeavoured to divest it, as the end of suffering, of every terror. Life lost much of its bitterness when men had found a refuge from the storms of fate—a speedy deliverance from dotage and pain. Death ceased to be terrible when it was regarded rather as a remedy than as a sentence. Life and death in the Stoical system were attuned to the same key. The deification

¹ Seneca, *Ep.* lxxv.

² Stobæus. One of the most deliberate suicides recorded was that of a Greek woman of ninety years old. (Val. Maxim. ii. 6, § 8.)

³ Plin. *Ep.* iii. 7. He starved himself to death.

⁴ *Ep.* i. 22. Some of Pliny's expressions are remarkable: "Id ergo arduum in primis et præcipua laude dignum puto. Nam impetu quodam et instinctu procurrare ad mortem, commune cum multis: deliberare vero et causas ejus expendere, utque suaserit ratio, vitæ mortisque consilium suscipere vel ponere, ingentis est animi." In this case the doctors pronounced that recovery was possible, and the suicide was in consequence averted.

⁵ Lib. vi. *Ep.* xxiv.

⁶ *Ep.* lxxvii. On the former career of Marcellinus, see *Ep.* xxix.

of human virtue, the total absence of all sense of sin, the proud, stubborn will that deemed humiliation the worst of stains, appeared alike in each. The type of its own kind was perfect. All the virtues and all the majesty that accompany human pride, when developed to the highest point and directed to the noblest ends, were here displayed. All those which accompany humility and self-abasement were absent.

I desire at this stage of our enquiry to pause for a moment, in order to retrace briefly the leading steps of the foregoing argument, and thus to bring into the clearest light the connection which many details and quotations may have occasionally obscured. Such a review will show at a single glance in what respects Stoicism was a result of the pre-existent state of society, and in what respects it was an active agent; how far its influence was preparing the way for Christian ethics, and how far it was opposed to them.

We have seen, then, that among the Romans, as among other people, a very clear and definite type of moral excellence was created before men had formed any clear intellectual notions of the nature and sanctions of virtue. The characters of men are chiefly governed by their occupations, and, the Republic being organised altogether with a view to military success, it had attained all the virtues and vices of a military society. We have seen, too, that at all times, but most especially under the conditions of ancient warfare, military life is very unfavourable to the amiable, and very favourable to the heroic virtues. The Roman had learnt to value force very highly. Being continually engaged in inflicting pain, his natural or instinctive humanity was very low. His moral feelings were almost bounded by political limits, acting only, and with different degrees of intensity, towards his class, his country, and its allies. Indomitable pride was the most prominent element of his character. A victorious army which is humble or diffident, or tolerant of insult, or anxious to take the second place, is, indeed, almost a contradiction of terms. The spirit of patriotism, in its relation to foreigners, like that of political liberty in its relation to governors, is a spirit of constant and jealous self-assertion; and although both are very consonant with high morality and great self-devotion, we rarely find that the

grace of genuine humility can flourish in a society that is intensely pervaded by their influence. The kind of excellence that found most favour in Roman eyes was simple, forcible, massive, but coarse-grained. Subtlety of motives, refinements of feelings, delicacies of susceptibility, were rarely appreciated.

This was the darker side of the picture. On the other hand, the national character, being formed by a profession in which mercenary considerations are less powerful, and splendid examples of self-devotion more frequent, than in any other, had early risen to a heroic level. Death being continually confronted, to meet it with courage was the chief test of virtue. The habits of men were unaffected, frugal, honourable, and laborious. A stern discipline pervading all ages and classes of society, the will was trained, to an almost unexampled degree, to repress the passions, to endure suffering and opposition, to tend steadily and fearlessly towards an unpopular end. A sense of duty was very widely diffused, and a deep attachment to the interests of the city became the parent of many virtues.

Such was the type of excellence the Roman people had attained at a time when its intellectual cultivation produced philosophical discussions, and when numerous Greek professors, attracted partly by political events and partly by the patronage of Scipio Æmilianus, arrived at Rome, bringing with them the tenets of the great schools of Zeno and Epicurus, and of the many minor sects that clustered around them. Epicureanism being essentially opposed to the pre-existing type of virtue, though it spread greatly, never attained the position of a school of virtue. Stoicism, taught by Panætius of Rhodes, and soon after by the Syrian Posidonius, became the true religion of the educated classes. It furnished the principles of virtue, coloured the noblest literature of the time, and guided all the developments of moral enthusiasm.

The Stoical system of ethics was in the highest sense a system of independent morals. It taught that our reason reveals to us a certain law of nature, and that a desire to conform to this law, irrespectively of all considerations of reward or punishment, of happiness or the reverse, is a possible and a sufficient motive of virtue. It was also in the highest sense a system of discipline. It taught that the will,

acting under the complete control of the reason, is the sole principle of virtue, and that all the emotional part of our being is of the nature of a disease. Its whole tendency was, therefore, to dignify and strengthen the will, and to degrade and suppress the desires. It taught, moreover, that man is capable of attaining an extremely high degree of moral excellence, that he has nothing to fear beyond the present life, that it is essential to the dignity and consistence of his character that he should regard death without dismay, and that he has a right to hasten it if he desires.

It is easy to see that this system of ethics was strictly consonant with the type of character the circumstances of the Roman people had formed. It is also manifest that while the force of circumstances had in the first instance secured its ascendancy, the energy of will which it produced would enable it to offer a powerful resistance to the tendencies of an altered condition of society. This was pre-eminently shown in the history of Roman Stoicism. The austere purity of the writings of Seneca and his school is a fact probably unique in history, when we consider, on the one hand, the intense and undisguised depravity of the Empire, and on the other the prominent position of most of the leading Stoics in the very centre of the stream. More than once in later periods did great intellectual brilliancy coincide with general depravity, but on none of these occasions was this moral phenomenon reproduced. In the age of Leo X., in the age of the French Regency, or of Lewis XV., we look in vain for high moral teaching in the centre of Italian or of Parisian civilisation. The true teachers of those ages were the reformers, who arose in obscure towns of Germany or Switzerland, or that diseased recluse who, from his solitude near Geneva, fascinated Europe by the gleams of a dazzling and almost peerless eloquence, and by a moral teaching which, though often feverish, paradoxical, and impractical, abounded in passages of transcendent majesty and of the most entrancing purity and beauty. But even the best moral teachers who rose in the centres of the depraved society felt the contagion of the surrounding vice. Their ideal was depressed, their austerity was relaxed, they appealed to sordid and worldly motives, their judgments of character were wavering and uncertain, their whole

teaching was of the nature of a compromise. But in ancient Rome, if the teachers of virtue acted but feebly upon the surrounding corruption, their own tenets were at least unstained. The splendour of the genius of Cæsar never eclipsed the moral grandeur of the vanquished Cato, and amid all the dramatic vicissitudes of civil war and of political convulsion, the supreme authority of moral distinctions was never forgotten. The eloquence of Livy was chiefly employed in painting virtue, the eloquence of Tacitus in branding vice. The Stoics never lowered their standard because of the depravity around them, and if we trace in their teaching any reflection of the prevailing worship of enjoyment, it is only in the passionate intensity with which they dwelt upon the tranquillity of the tomb.

But it is not sufficient for a moral system to form a bulwark against vice, it must also be capable of admitting those extensions and refinements of moral sympathies which advancing civilisation produces, and the inflexibility of its antagonism to evil by no means implies its capacity of enlarging its conceptions of good. During the period which elapsed between the importation of Stoical tenets into Rome and the ascendancy of Christianity, an extremely important transformation of moral ideas had been effected by political changes, and it became a question how far the new elements could coalesce with the Stoical ideal, and how far they tended to replace it by an essentially different type. These changes were twofold, but were very closely connected. They consisted of the increasing prominence of the benevolent or amiable, as distinguished from the heroic qualities, and of the enlargement of moral sympathies, which, having at first comprised only a class or a nation, came at last, by the destruction of many artificial barriers, to include all classes and all nations. The causes of these changes—which were the most important antecedents of the triumph of Christianity—are very complicated and numerous, but it will, I think, be possible to give in a few pages a sufficiently clear outline of the movement.

It originated in the Roman Empire at the time when the union of the Greek and Latin civilisations was effected by the conquest of Greece. The general humanity of the Greeks had always been incomparably greater than that of the

Romans. The refining influence of their art and literature, their ignorance of gladiatorial games, and their comparative freedom from the spirit of conquest, had separated them widely from their semi-barbarous conquerors, and had given a peculiar softness and tenderness to their ideal characters. Pericles, who, when the friends who had gathered round his death-bed, imagining him to be insensible, were recounting his splendid deeds, told them that they had forgotten his best title to fame—that "no Athenian had ever worn mourning on his account"; Aristides, praying the gods that those who had banished him might never be compelled by danger or suffering to recall him; Phocion, when unjustly condemned, exhorting his son never to avenge his death, all represent a type of character of a milder kind than that which Roman influences produced. The plays of Euripides had been to the ancient world the first great revelation of the supreme beauty of the gentler virtues. Among the many forms of worship that flourished at Athens, there was an altar which stood alone, conspicuous and honoured beyond all others. The suppliants thronged around it, but no image of a god, no symbol of dogma was there. It was dedicated to pity, and was venerated through all the ancient world as the first great assertion among mankind of the supreme sanctity of Mercy.¹

But while the Greek spirit was from a very early period distinguished for its humanity, it was at first as far removed from cosmopolitanism as that of Rome. It is well known that Phrynichus was fined because in his *Conquest of Miletus* he had represented the triumph of barbarians over Greeks.² His successor, Æschylus, deemed it necessary to violate

all dramatic probabilities by making the Persian king and courtiers continually speak of themselves as barbarians. Socrates, indeed, had proclaimed himself a citizen of the world,³ but Aristotle taught that Greeks had no more duties to barbarians than to wild beasts, and another philosopher was believed to have evinced an almost excessive range of sympathy when he declared that his affections extended beyond his own State, and included the whole people of Greece. But the dissolving and disintegrating philosophical discussions that soon followed the death of Socrates, strengthened by political events, tended powerfully to destroy this feeling. The traditions that attached Greek philosophy to Egypt, the subsequent admiration for the schools of India, to which Pyrrho and Anaxarchus are said to have resorted,⁴ the prevalence of Cynicism and Epicureanism, which agreed in inculcating indifference to political life, the complete decomposition of the popular national religions, and the incompatibility of a narrow local feeling with great knowledge and matured civilisation, were the intellectual causes of the change, and the movement of expansion received a great political stimulus when Alexander eclipsed the glories of Spartan and Athenian history by the vision of universal empire, accorded to the conquered nations the privileges of the conquerors, and created in Alexandria a great centre both of commercial intercourse and of philosophical eclecticism.⁵

It is evident, therefore, that the prevalence of Greek ideas in Rome would be in a twofold way destructive of narrow national feelings. It was the ascendancy of a people who were not Romans, and of a people who had already become in a great degree emancipated from local

¹ See the very beautiful lines of Statius:—

"Urbe fuit media nulli concessa potentum
Ara Deum, mitis posuit Clementia sedem:
Et miseri fecere sacram, sine supplice numquam
Illa novo; nulla damnavit vota repulsa
Audit quicunque rogant, noctesque diesque
Ire datum, et solis munus placare querelis.
Parca superstitio; non thurea flamma, nec altus
Accipitur sanguis, lachrymis altaria sudant. . .
Nulla autem effigies, nulli commissa metallo
Forma Deæ, mentes habitare et pectora gaudet.
Semper habet trepidos, semper locus horret egenis
Cæteris ignotæ tantum felicitus ara."

—*Thebaid*, xii. 481-496.

This altar was very old, and was said to have been founded by the descendants of Hercules. Diodorus of Sicily, however, makes a Syracusan say that it was brought from Syracuse (lib. xiii. 22). Marcus Aurelius erected a temple to "Beneficentia" on the Capitol. (Xiphilini, lib. lxxi. 34.)

² Herodotus, vi. 21.

³ See Arrian's *Epictetus*, i. 9. The very existence of the word φιλαθρηωτία shows that the idea was not altogether unknown.

⁴ Diog. Laert. *Pyrrho*. There was a tradition that Pythagoras had himself penetrated to India, and learnt philosophy from the gymnosophists (Apuleius, *Florida*, lib. ii. c. 15.)

⁵ This aspect of the career of Alexander was noticed in a remarkable passage of a treatise ascribed to Plutarch (*De Fort. Alex.*) "Conceiving he was sent by God to be an umpire between all, and to unite all together, he reduced by arms those whom he could not conquer by persuasion, and formed of a hundred diverse nations one single universal body, mingling, as it were, in one cup of friendship the customs, marriages, and laws of all. He desired that all should regard the whole world as their common country, . . . that every good man should be esteemed a Hellene, every evil man a barbarian." See on this subject the third lecture of Mr. Merivale (whose translation of Plutarch I have borrowed) *On the Conversion of the Roman Empire*.

sentiments. It is also evident that, the Greeks having had for several centuries a splendid literature, at a time when the Romans had none, and when the Latin language was still too rude for literary purposes, the period in which the Romans first emerged from a purely military condition into an intelligent civilisation would bring with it an ascendancy of Greek ideas. Fabius Pictor and Cincius Alimentus, the earliest native Roman historians, both wrote in Greek,¹ and, although the poems of Ennius and the *Origines* of Marcus Cato contributed largely to improve and fix the Latin language, the precedent was not at once discontinued.² After the conquest of Greece, the political ascendancy of the Romans and the intellectual ascendancy of Greece were alike universal.³ The conquered people, whose patriotic feelings had been greatly enfeebled by the influences I have noticed, acquiesced readily in their new condition, and, notwithstanding the vehement exertions of the conservative party, Greek manners, sentiments, and ideas soon penetrated into all classes, and moulded all the forms of Roman life. The elder Cato, as an acute observer has noticed, desired all Greek philosophers to be expelled from Rome. The younger Cato made Greek philosophers his most intimate friends.⁴ Roman virtue found its highest expression in Stoicism. Roman vice sheltered itself under the name of Epicurus. Diodorus of Sicily and Polybius first sketched in Greek the outlines of universal history. Dionysius of Halicarnassus explored Roman antiquities. Greek artists and Greek architects thronged the city; but the first, under Roman influence, abandoned the ideal for the portrait, and the second degraded the noble Corinthian pillar into the bastard composite.⁵ The theatre, which now started into sudden life, was borrowed altogether from the Greeks. Ennius and Pacuvius imitated Euripides; Cæcilius, Plautus, Terence,

and Nævius devoted themselves chiefly to Menander. Even the lover in the days of Lucretius painted his lady's charms in Greek.⁶ Immense sums were given for Greek literary slaves, and the attractions of the capital drew to Rome nearly all that was brilliant in Athenian society.

While the complete ascendancy of the intellect and manners of Greece was destroying the simplicity of the old Roman type, and at the same time enlarging the range of Roman sympathy, an equally powerful influence was breaking down the aristocratic and class feeling which had so long raised an insurmountable barrier between the nobles and the plebeians. Their long contentions had issued in the civil wars, the dictatorship of Julius Cæsar and the Empire, and these changes in a great measure obliterated the old lines of demarcation. Foreign wars, which develop with great intensity distinctive national types and divert the public mind from internal changes, are usually favourable to the conservative spirit; but civil wars are essentially revolutionary, for they overwhelm all class barriers, and throw open the highest prizes to energy and genius. Two very remarkable and altogether unprecedented illustrations of this truth occurred at Rome. Ventidius Bassus, by his military skill and by the friendship of Julius Cæsar and afterwards of Antony, rose from the position of mule-driver to the command of a Roman army, and at last to the consulate,⁷ which was also attained, about 40 B.C., by the Spaniard Cornelius Balbus.⁸ Augustus, though the most aristocratic of emperors, in order to discourage celibacy, permitted all citizens who were not senators to intermarry with freedwomen. The Empire was in several distinct ways unfavourable to class distinctions. It was for the most part essentially democratic, winning its popularity from the masses of the people, and crushing the Senate, which had been the

¹ They were both born about B.C. 250. See Sir C. Lewis, *Credibility of Early Roman History*, vol. i. p. 82.

² Aulus Gellius mentions the indignation of Marcus Cato against a consul named Albinus, who had written in Greek a Roman history, and prefaced it by an apology for his faults of style, on the ground that he was writing in a foreign language. (*Noct. Att. xi. 8.*)

³ See a vivid picture of the Greek influence upon Rome, in Mommsen's *Hist. of Rome* (Eng. trans.), vol. iii. pp. 423-426.

⁴ *Plin. Hist. Nat.* vii. 31.

⁵ See Friedländer, *Mœurs romaines du règne d'Auguste à la fin des Antonins* (French trans., 1865), tome i. pp. 6-7.

⁶ See the curious catalogue of Greek love terms in vogue (Lucretius, lib. iv. line 1160, &c.). Juvenal, more than a hundred years later, was extremely angry with the Roman ladies for making love in Greek (*Sat.* vi. lines 190-195). Friedländer remarks that there is no special term in Latin for to ask in marriage (tome i. p. 354).

⁷ Aul. Gell. *Noct.* xv. 4; Vell. Paterculus, ii. 63. The people were much scandalised at this elevation, and made epigrams about it. There is a curious catalogue of men who at different times rose in Rome from low positions to power and dignity, in Legendre, *Traité de l'Opinion*, tome ii. pp. 254-255.

⁸ Dio Cassius, xlviii. 32. *Plin. Hist. Nat.* v. 5; vii. 44.

common centre of aristocracy and of freedom. A new despotic power, bearing alike on all classes, reduced them to an equality of servitude. The emperors were themselves in many cases the mere creatures of revolt, and their policy was governed by their origin. Their jealousy struck down many of the nobles, while others were ruined by the public games which it became customary to give, or by the luxury to which, in the absence of political occupations, they were impelled, and the relative importance of all was diminished by the new creations. The ascendancy of wealth began to pass into new quarters. Delators, or political informers, encouraged by the emperors, and enriched by the confiscated properties of those whose condemnation they had procured, rose to great influence. From the time of Caligula, for several reigns, the most influential citizens were freedmen, who occupied the principal offices in the palace, and usually obtained complete ascendancy over the emperors. Through them alone petitions were presented. By their instrumentality the Imperial favours were distributed. They sometimes dethroned the emperors. They retained their power unshaken through a succession of revolutions. In wealth, in power, in the crowd of their courtiers, in the splendour of their palaces in life and of their tombs in death, they eclipsed all others, and men whom the early Roman patricians would have almost disdained to notice saw the proudest struggling for their favour.¹

Together with these influences many others of a kindred nature may be detected. The colonial policy which the Gracchi had advocated was carried out at Narbonne, and during the latter days of Julius Cæsar, to the amazement and scandal of the Romans, Gauls of this province obtained seats in the Senate.² The immense extent of the Empire made it necessary for numerous troops to remain during long periods of time in distant provinces, and the foreign habits that were thus acquired began the destruction of the exclusive feelings of the Roman army, which the subsequent enrolment of barbarians completed. The public games, the immense luxury, the concentration of

power, wealth, and genius, made Rome the centre of a vast and ceaseless concourse of strangers, the focus of all the various philosophies and religions of the Empire, and its population soon became an amorphous, heterogeneous mass, in which all nations, customs, languages, and creeds, all degrees of virtue and vice, of refinement and barbarism, of scepticism and credulity, intermingled and interacted. Travelling had become more easy and perhaps more frequent than it has been at any other period before the nineteenth century. The subjection of the whole civilised world to a single rule removed the chief obstacles to locomotion. Magnificent roads, which modern nations have rarely rivalled and never surpassed, intersected the entire Empire, and relays of post-horses enabled the voyager to proceed with an astonishing rapidity. The sea, which, after the destruction of the fleets of Carthage, had fallen almost completely under the dominion of pirates, had been cleared by Pompey. The European shores of the Mediterranean and the port of Alexandria were thronged with vessels. Romans traversed the whole extent of the Empire on political, military, or commercial errands, or in search of health, or knowledge, or pleasure.³ The entrancing beauties of Como and of Tempe, the luxurious manners of Baiæ and Corinth, the schools, commerce, climate, and temples of Alexandria, the soft winters of Sicily, the artistic wonders and historic recollections of Athens and the Nile, the great colonial interests of Gaul, attracted their thousands, while Roman luxury needed the products of the remotest lands, and the demand for animals for the amphitheatre spread Roman enterprise into the wildest deserts. In the capital, the toleration accorded to different creeds was such that the city soon became a miniature of the world. Almost every variety of charlatanism and of belief displayed itself unchecked, and boasted its train of proselytes. Foreign ideas were in every form in the ascendent. Greece, which had presided over the intellectual development of Rome, acquired a new influence under the favouring policy of Hadrian, and Greek became the language of some of the later, as it had been of the earliest, writers, Egyptian

¹ The history of the influence of freedmen is minutely traced by Friedländer, *Maurus romaines du règne d'Auguste à la fin des Antonins*, tome i. pp. 58-93. Statius and Martial sang their praises.

² See Tacit. *Ann.* vi. 23-25.

³ On the Roman journeys see the almost exhaustive dissertation of Friedländer, tome ii.

religions and philosophies excited the wildest enthusiasm. As early as the reign of Augustus there were many thousands of Jewish residents at Rome,¹ and their manners and creed spread widely among the people.² The Carthaginian Apuleius,³ the Gauls Florus and Favorinus, the Spaniards Lucan, Columella, Martial, Seneca, and Quintilian, had all in their different departments a high place in Roman literature or philosophy.

In the slave world a corresponding revolution was taking place. The large proportion of physicians and sculptors who were slaves, the appearance of three or four distinguished authors in the slave class, the numerous literary slaves imported from Greece, and the splendid examples of courage, endurance, and devotion to their masters furnished by slaves during the civil wars, and during some of the worst periods of the Empire, were bridging the chasm between the servile and the free classes, and the same tendency was more powerfully stimulated by the vast numbers and overwhelming influence of the freedmen. The enormous scale and frequent fluctuations of the great Roman establishments, and the innumerable captives reduced to slavery after every war, rendered manumission both frequent and easy, and it was soon regarded as a normal result of faithful service. Many slaves bought their freedom out of the savings which their masters always permitted them to make. Others paid for it by their labour after their emancipation. Some masters emancipated their slaves in order to obtain their part in the distribution of corn; others to prevent the discovery of their own crimes by the torture of their slaves; others through vanity, being desirous of having their funerals attended by a long train of freedmen; very many simply as a reward for long service.⁴ The freedman

was still under what was termed the patronage of his former master; he was bound to him by what in a later age would have been called a feudal tie, and the political and social importance of a noble depended in a very great degree upon the multitude of his clients. The children of the emancipated slaves were in the same relation to the patron, and it was only in the third generation that all disqualifications and restraints were abrogated. In consequence of this system manumission was often the interest of the master. In the course of his life he enfranchised individual slaves. On his death-bed or by his will he constantly emancipated multitudes. Emancipation by testament acquired such dimensions that Augustus found it necessary to restrict the power; and he made several limitations, of which the most important was that no one should emancipate by his will more than one hundred of his slaves.⁵ It was once proposed that the slaves should be distinguished by a special dress, but the proposition was abandoned because their number was so great that to reveal to them their strength would be to place the city at their mercy.⁶ Even among those who were not slaves the element that was derived from slavery soon preponderated. The majority of the free population had probably either themselves been slaves, or were descended from slaves, and men with this tainted lineage penetrated to all the offices of the State.⁷ "There was," as has been well said, "a circulation of men from all the universe. Rome received them slaves, and sent them back Romans."⁸

It is manifest how profound a change had taken place since the Republican days, when the highest dignities were long monopolised by a single class, when the censors repressed with a stringent severity every form or exhibition of luxury, when the rhetoricians were banished from the city, lest the faintest tinge of foreign manners should impair the stern simplicity of the people, and when the proposal to transfer the capital to Veii after a great disaster was rejected on the ground that it would be impious

¹ Joseph (*Antiq.* xvii. 11, § 2) says above 8,000 Jews resident in Rome took part in a petition to Cæsar. If these were all adult males, the total number of Jewish residents must have been extremely large.

² See the famous fragment of Seneca cited by St. Augustine (*De Civ. Dei*, vi. 11): "Usque eo sceleratissime gens consuetudo convulsa, ut per omnes jam terras recepta sit: victi victoribus leges dederunt." There are numerous scattered allusions to the Jews in Horace, Juvenal, and Martial.

³ The Carthaginian influence was specially conspicuous in early Christian history. Tertullian and Cyprian (both Africans) are justly regarded as the founders of Latin theology. (See Milman's *Latin Christianity*, ed. 1867, vol. i. pp. 35-36.)

⁴ Milo had emancipated some slaves to prevent them from being tortured as witnesses. (Cic. *Pro Milo*.)

This was made illegal. The other reasons for enfranchisement are given by Dion Halicarn. *Antiq.* lib. iv.

⁵ This subject is fully treated by Wallon, *Hist. de l'Esclavage dans l'Antiquité*.

⁶ Senec. *De Clem.* i. 24.

⁷ See, on the prominence and the insolence of the freedmen, Tacit. *Annal.* iii. 26-27.

⁸ Montesquieu, *Décadence des Romains*, ch. xiii.

to worship the Roman deities anywhere but on the Capitol, or for the Flamens and the Vestals to emigrate beyond the walls.¹

The greater number of these tendencies to universal fusion or equality were blind forces resulting from the stress of circumstances, and not from any human forethought, or were agencies that were put in motion for a different object. It must, however, be acknowledged that a definite theory of policy had a considerable part in accelerating the movement. The policy of the Republic may be broadly described as a policy of conquest, and that of the Empire as a policy of preservation. The Romans, having acquired a vast dominion, were met by the great problem which every first-class power is called upon to solve — by what means many communities, with different languages, customs, characters, and traditions, can be retained peaceably under a single ruler. In modern times this difficulty has been most successfully met by local legislatures, which, if they supply "a line of cleavage," a nucleus around which the spirit of opposition may form, have, on the other hand, the priceless advantage of giving the annexed people a large measure of self-government, a centre and safety-valve of local public opinion, a sphere for local ambitions, and a hierarchy of institutions adapted to the distinctive national type. Under no other conditions can a complex empire be carried on with so little strain, or effort, or humiliation, or its inevitable final dissolution be effected with so little danger or convulsion. But local legislatures, which are the especial glory of English statesmanship, belong exclusively to modern civilisation. The Roman method of conciliation was, first of all, the most ample toleration of the customs, religion, and municipal freedom of the conquered, and then their gradual admission to the privileges of the conqueror. By confiding to them in a great measure the defence of the Empire, by throwing open to them the offices of State, and especially by according to them the right of Roman citizenship, which had been for centuries jealously restricted to the inhabitants of Rome, and was afterwards only conceded to Italy and Cisalpine Gaul, the emperors

sought to attach them to their throne. The process was very gradual; but the whole movement of political emancipation attained its completion when the Imperial throne was occupied by the Spaniard Trajan, and by Pertinax, the son of a freedman, and when an edict of Caracalla extended the rights of Roman citizenship to all the provinces of the Empire.

It will appear evident from the foregoing sketch that the period which elapsed between Panætius and Constantine exhibited an irresistible tendency to cosmopolitanism. The convergence, when we consider the number, force, and harmony of the influences that composed it, is indeed unexampled in history. The movement extended through all the fields of religious, philosophical, political, industrial, military, and domestic life. The character of the people was completely transformed, the landmarks of all its institutions were removed, the whole principle of its organisation was reversed. It would be impossible to find a more striking example of the manner in which events govern character, destroying old habits and associations, and thus altering that national type of excellence which is, for the most part, the expression or net moral result of the national institutions and circumstances. The effect of the movement was, no doubt, in many respects evil, and some of the best men, such as the elder Cato and Tacitus, opposed it, as leading to the demoralisation of the Empire; but, if it increased vice, it also gave a peculiar character to virtue. It was impossible that the conception of excellence, formed in a society where everything conspired to deepen class divisions and national jealousies and antipathies, should be retained unaltered in a period of universal intercourse and amalgamation. The moral expression of the first period is obviously to be found in the narrower military and patriotic virtues; that of the second period in enlarged philanthropy and sympathy.

The Stoical philosophy was admirably fitted to preside over this extension of sympathies. Although it proved itself in every age the chief school of patriots, it recognised also from the very first, and in the most unequivocal manner, the fraternity of mankind. The Stoic taught that virtue alone is a good, and that all other things are indifferent; and from this position he inferred that birth, rank, country, or wealth are the mere accidents

¹ See the very curious speech attributed to Camillus (Liv., v. 52).

of life, and that virtue alone makes one man superior to another. He taught also that the Deity is an all-pervading Spirit animating the universe, and revealed with especial clearness in the soul of a man; and he concluded that all men are fellow-members of a single body, united by participation in the same Divine Spirit. These two doctrines formed part of the very first teaching of the Stoics; but it was the special glory of the Roman teachers, and an obvious result of the condition of affairs I have described, to have brought them into full relief. One of the most emphatic as well as one of the earliest extant assertions of the duty of "charity to the human race"¹ occurs in the treatise of Cicero upon duties, which was avowedly based upon Stoicism. Writing at a period when the movement of amalgamation had for a generation been rapidly proceeding,² and adopting almost without restriction the ethics of the Stoics, Cicero maintained the doctrine of universal brotherhood as distinctly as it was afterwards maintained by the Christian Church. "This whole world," he tells us, "is to be regarded as the common city of gods and men."³ "Men were born for the sake of men, that each should assist the others."⁴ "Nature ordains that a man should wish the good of every man, whoever he may be, for this very reason that he is a man."⁵ "To reduce man to the duties of his own city, and to disengage him from duties to the members of other cities, is to break the universal society of the human race."⁶ "Nature has inclined us to love men, and this is the foundation of the law."⁷ The same principles were reiterated with increasing emphasis by the later Stoics. Adopting the well-known line which Terence had translated from Menander, they maintained that man should deem nothing human foreign to his interest. Lucan expatiated with all the fervour of a Christian poet upon the time when "the human race will cast aside its weapons, and when all nations will learn to love."⁸ "The whole universe," said Seneca, "which you see around you, comprising

all things both divine and human, is one. We are members of one great body. Nature has made us relatives when it begat us from the same materials and for the same destinies. She planted in us a mutual love, and fitted us for a social life."⁹ "What is a Roman knight, or freedman, or slave? These are but names springing from ambition or from injury."¹⁰ "I know that my country is the world, and my guardians are the gods."¹¹ "You are a citizen," said Epictetus, "and a part of the world.... The duty of a citizen is in nothing to consider his own interest distinct from that of others, as the hand or foot, if they possessed reason and understood the law of nature, would do and wish nothing that had not some relation to the rest of the body."¹² "An Antonine," said Marcus Aurelius, "my country is Rome; as a man, it is the world."¹³

So far Stoicism appears fully equal to the moral requirements of the age. It would be impossible to recognise more cordially or to enforce more beautifully that doctrine of universal brotherhood for which the circumstances of the Roman Empire had made men ripe. Plato had said that no one is born for himself alone, but that he owes himself in part to his country, in part to his parents, and in part to his friends. The Roman Stoics, taking a wider survey, declared that man is born not for himself, but for the whole world.¹⁴ And their doctrine was perfectly consistent with the original principles of their school.

But while Stoicism was quite capable of representing the widening movement, it was not equally capable of representing the softening movement of civilisation. Its condemnation of the affections, and its stern, tense ideal, admirably fitted for the struggles of a simple military age, were unsuited for the mild manners and luxurious tastes of the age of the Antonines. A class of writers began to arise who, like the Stoics, believed virtue, rather than enjoyment, to be the supreme good, and who acknowledged that virtue consisted solely of the control which the enlightened will exercises over the desires, but who at the same time gave free scope

¹ "Caritas generis humani." (*De Finib.*) So, too, he speaks (*De Leg.* i. 23) of every good man as "civis totius mundi."

² He speaks of Rome as "civitas ex nationum conventu constituta."

³ *De Legib.* i. 7. ⁴ *De Offic.* 5 *Ibid.* iii. 6.

⁵ *De Offic.* iii. 6. ⁶ *De Legib.* i. 7. ⁷ *De Legib.* i. 15.

⁸ "Tunc genus humanum positum sibi consulat armis, Inque vicem gens omnis amet." *Pharsalia*, vi.

⁹ *Ep.* lxxv. ¹⁰ *Ep.* lxxxi. ¹¹ *De Vita Beata*, xv.

¹² *Arrian*, ii. 10. ¹³ *ib.* 44.

¹⁴ "Hæc dum immota Catoni"

Sæcta iust, servare modum, firmoque tenere,
Naturamque sequi, patriæque impendere vitum,
Nec sibi sed toti gentem se credere mundo."

—Lucan, *Phars.* ii. 330-333.

to the benevolent affections and a more religious and mystical tone to the whole scheme of morals. Professing various speculative doctrines, and calling themselves by many names—eclectics, peripatetics or Platonists—they agreed in forming or representing a moral character, less strong, less sublime, less capable of endurance and heroism, less conspicuous for energy of will, than that of the Stoics, but far more tender and attractive. The virtues of force began to recede, and the gentler virtues to advance, in the moral type. Insensibility to suffering was no longer professed, indomitable strength was no longer idolised, and it was felt that weakness and sorrow have their own appropriate virtues.* The works of these writers are full of delicate touches which nothing but strong and lively feelings could have suggested. We find this in the well-known letter of Pliny on the death of his slaves,² in the frequent protests against the ostentation of indifference with which the Stoics regarded the loss of their friends, in many instances of simple, artless pathos, which strike the finest chords of our nature. When Plutarch, after the death of his daughter, was writing a letter of consolation to his wife, we find him turning away from all the commonplaces of the Stoics as the recollection of one simple trait of his little child rushed upon his mind: "She desired her nurse to press even her dolls to the breast. She was so loving that she wished everything that gave her pleasure to share in the best of what she had."

Plutarch, whose fame as a biographer has, I think, unduly eclipsed his reputation as a moralist, may be justly regarded as the leader of this movement, and his moral writings may be profitably compared with those of Seneca, the most ample exponent of the sterner school. Seneca is not unfrequently self-conscious, theatrical, and overstrained. His precepts have something of the affected ring of a popular preacher. The imperfect fusion of his short sentences gives his style a

disjointed and, so to speak, granulated character, which the Emperor Caligula happily expressed when he compared it to sand without cement; yet he often rises to a majesty of eloquence, a grandeur both of thought and of expression, that few moralists have ever rivalled. Plutarch, though far less sublime, is more sustained, equable, and uniformly pleasing. The Montaigne of antiquity, his genius coruscates playfully and gracefully around his subject; he delights in illustrations which are often singularly vivid and original, but which, by their excessive multiplication, appear sometimes rather the texture than the ornament of his discourse. A gentle, tender spirit, and a judgment equally free from paradox, exaggeration, and excessive subtlety, are the characteristics of all he wrote. Plutarch excels most in collecting motives of consolation; Seneca in forming characters that need no consolation. There is something of the woman in Plutarch; Seneca is all a man. The writings of the first resemble the strains of the flute, to which the ancients attributed the power of calming the passions and charming away the clouds of sorrow, and drawing men by a gentle suasion into the paths of virtue; the writings of the other are like the trumpet-blast, which kindles the soul with an heroic courage. The first is most fitted to console a mother sorrowing over her dead child, the second to nerve a brave man, without flinching and without illusion, to grapple with an inevitable fate.

The elaborate letters which Seneca has left us on distinctive tenets of the Stoical school, such as the equality of vices or the evil of the affections, have now little more than an historic interest; but the general tone of his writings gives them a permanent importance, for they reflect and foster a certain type of excellence which, since the extinction of Stoicism, has had no adequate expression in literature. The prevailing moral tone of Plutarch, on the other hand, being formed mainly on the prominence of the amiable virtues, has been eclipsed or transcended by the Christian writers, but his definite contributions to philosophy and morals are more important than those of Seneca. He has left us one of the best works on superstition, and one of the most ingenious works on Providence we possess. He was probably the first writer who

* There is a passage on this subject in one of the letters of Pliny which I think extremely remarkable, and to which I can recall no pagan parallel. "Nuper me ejusdem amici languor admonuit, optimos esse nos cum infirmis sumus. Quem enim infirmum aut avarum aut libidinosum sollicitat? Non amoribus servit, non appetit honores. . . tunc deos, tunc nomen esse se meminit." (Pliny, *Ep.* vii. 26.)

² *Ep.* viii. 16. He says: "Hominis est enim afflicto ore, sentire, resistere tamen, et solatia admittere, non solatus non egere."

advocated very strongly humanity to animals on the broad ground of universal benevolence, as distinguished from the Pythagorean doctrine of transmigration, and he was also remarkable, beyond all his contemporaries, for his high sense of female excellence and of the sanctity of female love.

The Romans had at all times cared more for the practical tendency of a system of philosophy than for its logical or speculative consistency. One of the chief attractions of Stoicism, in their eyes, had been that its main object was not to build a system of opinion, but to propose a pattern of life,¹ and Stoicism itself was only adapted to the Roman character after it had been simplified by Panætius.² Although the system could never free itself altogether from that hardness which rendered it so unsuited for an advanced civilisation, it was profoundly modified by the later Stoics, who rarely scrupled to temper it by the admixture of new doctrines. Seneca himself was by no means an unmixed Stoic. If Epictetus was more nearly so, this was probably because the extreme hardship he underwent made him dwell more than his contemporaries upon the importance of fortitude and endurance. Marcus Aurelius was surrounded by the disciples of the most various schools, and his Stoicism was much tintured by the milder and more religious spirit of Platonism. The Stoics, like all other men, felt the moral current of the time, though they yielded to it less readily than some others. In Thræsea, who occupied in his age a position analogous to that of Cato in an earlier period, we find little or nothing of the asperity and hardness of his great prototype. In the writings of the later Stoics, if we find the same elements as in those of their predecessors, these elements are at least combined in different proportions.

In the first place, Stoicism became more essentially religious. The Stoical character, like all others of a high order, had always been reverential; but its reverence differed widely from that of Christians. It was concentrated much less upon the Deity than upon virtue, and especially upon virtue as exhibited in

great men. When Lucan, extolling his hero, boasted that "the gods favoured the conquering cause, but Cato the conquered," or when Seneca described "the fortune of Sulla" as "the crime of the gods," these sentences, which sound to modern ears grossly blasphemous, appear to have excited no murmur. We have already seen the audacious language with which the sage claimed an equality with the Divinity. On the other hand, the reverence for virtue apart from all conditions of success, and especially for men of the stamp of Cato, who through a strong moral conviction struggled bravely, though unsuccessfully, against force, genius, or circumstances, was perhaps more steady and more passionate than in any later age. The duty of absolute submission to Providence, as I have already shown, was continually inculcated, and the pantheistic notion of all virtue being a part or emanation of the Deity was often asserted; but man was still the centre of the Stoic's scheme, the ideal to which his reverence and devotion aspired. In later Stoicism this point of view was gradually changed. Without any formal abandonment of their pantheistic conceptions, the language of philosophers recognised with much greater clearness a distinct and personal Divinity. Every page of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius is impregnated with the deepest religious feeling. "The first thing to learn," said the former, "is that there is a God, that His knowledge pervades the whole universe, and that it extends, not only to our acts, but to our thoughts and feelings.....He who seeks to please the gods must labour as far as lies in him to resemble them. He must be faithful as God is faithful, free as He is free, beneficent as He is beneficent, magnanimous as He is magnanimous."³ "To have God for our maker and father and guardian, should not that emancipate us from all sadness and from all fear?"⁴ "When you have shut your door and darkened your room, say not to yourself you are alone. God is in your room, and your attendant genius likewise. Think not that they need the light to see what you do.⁵ What can I, an old man and a cripple, do but praise God? If I were a nightingale, I would discharge the office of a nightingale; if a swan, that of a swan. But I am a reasonable

¹ This characteristic of Stoicism is well noticed in Grant's *Aristotle*, vol. i. p. 254. The first volume of this work contains an extremely good review of the principles of the Stoics.

² *Cic. De Finib.* lib. iv.

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³ Arrian, *Epict.* ii. 14.

⁴ *Ibid.* i. 9.

⁵ *Ibid.* i. 44.

being; my mission is to praise God, and I fulfil it; nor shall I ever, as far as lies in me, shrink from my task, and I exhort you to join in the same song of praise."¹

The same religious character is exhibited, if possible, in a still greater degree in the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius; but in one respect the ethics of the emperor differ widely from those of the slave. In Epictetus we invariably find the strongest sense of the majesty of man. As the child of the Deity, as a being capable of attaining the most exalted virtue, he magnified him to the highest point, and never more so than in the very passage in which he exhorted his disciples to beware of haughtiness. The Jupiter Olympus of Phidias, he reminds them, exhibits no arrogance, but the unclouded serenity of perfect confidence and strength.² Marcus Aurelius, on the other hand, dwelt rather on the weakness than on the force of man, and his meditations breathe a spirit, if not of Christian humility, at least of the gentlest and most touching modesty. He was not, it is true, like some later saints, who habitually apply to themselves language of reprobation which would be exaggerated if applied to the murderer or the adulterer. He did not shrink from recognising human virtue as a reality, and thanking Providence for the degree in which he had attained it; but he continually reviewed with an unsparing severity the weaknesses of his character, he accepted and even solicited reproofs from every teacher of virtue, he made it his aim, in a position of supreme power, to check every emotion of arrogance and pride, and he set before him an ideal of excellence which awed and subdued his mind.

Another very remarkable feature of later Stoicism was its increasingly introspective character. In the philosophy of Cato and Cicero virtue was displayed almost exclusively in action. In the later Stoics self-examination and purity of thought were continually inculcated. There are some writers who, with an obstinacy which it is more easy to explain than to excuse, persist, in defiance of the very clearest evidence to the contrary, in representing these virtues as exclusively Christian, and in maintaining, without a shadow of proof, that the place they undeniably occupy in the later Roman

moralists was due to the direct or indirect influence of the new faith. The plain fact is that they were fully known to the Greeks, and both Plato and Zeno even exhorted men to study their dreams, on the ground that these often reveal the latent tendencies of the disposition.³ Pythagoras urged his disciples daily to examine themselves when they retired to rest,⁴ and this practice soon became a recognised part of the Pythagorean discipline.⁵ It was introduced into Rome with the school before the close of the Republic. It was known in the time of Cicero⁶ and Horace.⁷ Sextius, one of the masters of Seneca, a philosopher of the school of Pythagoras, who flourished chiefly before the Christian era, was accustomed daily to devote a portion of time to self-examination; and Seneca, who at first inclined much to the tenets of Pythagoras,⁸ expressly tells us that it was from Sextius he learnt the practice.⁹ The increasing prominence of the Pythagorean philosophy which accompanied the invasion of Oriental creeds, the natural tendency of the Empire, by closing the avenues of political life, to divert the attention from action to emotion, and also the increased latitude allowed to the play of the sympathies or affections by the later Stoics, brought this emotional part of virtue into great prominence. The letters of Seneca are a kind of moral medicine, applied for the most part to the cure of different infirmities of character. Plutarch, in a beautiful treatise on *The Signs of Moral Progress*, treated the culture of the feelings with delicate skill. The duty of serving the Divinity with a pure mind rather than by formal rites became a commonplace of literature, and self-examination one of the most recognised of duties. Epictetus urged men so to purify their imaginations that at the sight of a beautiful woman they should not even mentally exclaim, "Happy her

¹ Plutarch, *De Profectu in Virtute*. This precept was enforced by Bishop Sanderson in one of his sermons (*Sanderson's Commonplace Book*, vol. 1, p. 92.)

² Diog. Laert. *Pythagoras*.

³ Thus Cicero makes Cato say: "Pythagoreorumque more, exercendæ memoriæ gratia, quid quoque die dixerim, audiverim, egerim, commemorare vespere" (*De Senect.* xi.)

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Sermon* i. 4.

⁶ He even gave up, for a time, eating meat, in obedience to the Pythagorean principles. (*Ep.* cviii.) Seneca had two masters of this school, Sextius and Sotion. He was at this time not more than seventeen years old. (See Aubertin, *Étude critique sur les Rapports supposés entre Sénèque et St. Paul*, p. 156.)

⁷ See his very beautiful description of the self-examination of Sextius and of himself. (*De Vita*, iii. 36.)

⁸ Arrian, *Epict.* i. 16.

⁹ *Ibid.* ii. 8.

husband!" The *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, above all, are throughout an exercise of self-examination, and the duty of watching over the thoughts is continually inculcated.

It was a saying of Plutarch that Stoicism, which sometimes exercised a prejudicial and hardening influence upon characters that were by nature stern and unbending, proved peculiarly useful as a cordial to those which were naturally gentle and yielding. Of this truth we can have no better illustration than is furnished by the life and writings of Marcus Aurelius, the last and most perfect representative of Roman Stoicism. A simple, childlike, and eminently affectionate disposition, with little strength of intellect, or perhaps originally of will, much more inclined to meditation, speculation, solitude, or friendship than to active and public life, with a profound aversion to the pomp of royalty, and with a rather strong natural leaning to pedantry, he had embraced the fortifying philosophy of Zeno in its best form; and that philosophy made him, perhaps, as nearly a perfectly virtuous man as has ever appeared upon our world. Tried by the chequered events of a reign of nineteen years, presiding over a society that was profoundly corrupt, and over a city that was notorious for its license, the perfection of his character awed even calumny to silence, and the spontaneous sentiment of his people proclaimed him rather a god than a man.¹ Very few men have ever lived concerning whose inner life we can speak so confidently. His *Meditations*, which form one of the most impressive, form also one of the truest, books in the whole range of religious literature. They consist of rude fragmentary notes without literary skill or arrangement, written for the most part in hasty, broken, and sometimes almost unintelligible sentences amid the turmoil of a camp,² and recording, in accents of the most penetrating sincerity, the struggles, doubts, and aims of a soul of which, to employ one of his own images, it may be truly said that it possessed the purity of a star, which needs no veil to

hide its nakedness. The undisputed master of the whole civilised world, he set before him as models such men as Thrasea and Helvidius, as Cato and Brutus, and he made it his aim to realise the conception of a free State in which all citizens are equal, and of a royalty which makes it its first duty to respect the liberty of the citizens.³ His life was passed in unremitting activity. For nearly twelve years he was absent with armies in the distant provinces of the Empire; and although his political capacity has been much and perhaps justly questioned, it is impossible to deny the unwearying zeal with which he discharged the duties of his great position. Yet few men have ever carried farther the virtue of little things, the delicate moral tact and the minute scruples which, though often exhibited by women and by secluded religionists, very rarely survive much contact with active life. The solicitude with which he endeavoured to persuade two jealous rhetoricians to abstain during their debates from retorts that might destroy their friendship,⁴ the careful gratitude with which, in a camp in Hungary, he recalled every moral obligation he could trace, even to the most obscure of his tutors,⁵ his anxiety to avoid all pedantry and mannerism in his conduct,⁶ and to repel every voluptuous imagination from his mind,⁷ his deep sense of the obligation of purity,⁸ his laborious efforts to correct a habit of drowsiness into which he had fallen, and his self-reproval when he had yielded to it,⁹ become all, I think, inexpressibly touching when we remember that they were exhibited by one who was the supreme ruler of the civilised globe, and who was continually engaged in the direction of the most gigantic interests. But that which is especially remarkable in Marcus Aurelius is the complete absence of fanaticism in his philanthropy. Despotism sincerely anxious to improve mankind are naturally led to

¹ i. 14.

² See his touching letter to Fronto, who was about to engage in a dispute with Herod Atticus.

³ i. 6-15. The eulogy he passed on his Stone Master Apollonius is worthy of notice. Apollonius furnished him with an example of the combination of extreme firmness and gentleness.

⁴ E.g. "Beware of Caesarising" (vi. 30). "Be neither a tragedian nor a comedian" (v. 28). "Be just and temperate as a follower of the gods, but be so with simplicity, for the pride of modesty is the worst of all" (viii. 27).

⁵ iii. 4.

⁶ i. 17.

⁷ v. 1.

¹ Arrian, ii. 18. Compare the *Maxims* of Epictetus, xxiiv.

² "Quod de Romulo acce creditum est, omnes pari consensu præsumerant, Marcum cetero recentum esse" (Aur. Vict. *Epit.* xvi.). "Deusque etiam nunc patet in" (Capitolinus).

³ The first book of his *Meditations* was written on the borders of the Granua, in Hungary.

endeavour, by acts of legislation, to force society into the paths which they believe to be good, and such men, acting under such motives, have sometimes been the scourges of mankind. Philip II. and Isabella the Catholic inflicted more suffering in obedience to their consciences than Nero and Domitian in obedience to their lusts. But Marcus Aurelius steadily resisted the temptation. "Never hope," he once wrote, "to realise Plato's Republic. Let it be sufficient that you have in some slight degree ameliorated mankind, and do not think that amelioration a matter of small importance. Who can change the opinions of men? and without a change of sentiments what can you make but reluctant slaves and hypocrites?"¹ He promulgated many laws inspired by a spirit of the purest benevolence. He mitigated the gladiatorial shows. He treated with invariable deference the Senate, which was the last bulwark of political freedom. He endowed many chairs of philosophy which were intended to diffuse knowledge and moral teaching through the people. He endeavoured by the example of his Court to correct the extravagances of luxury that were prevalent, and he exhibited in his own career a perfect model of an active and conscientious administrator; but he made no rash efforts to force the people by stringent laws out of the natural channel of their lives. Of the corruption of his subjects he was keenly sensible, and he bore it with a mournful but gentle patience. We may trace in this respect the milder spirit of those Greek teachers who had diverged from Stoicism, but it was especially from the Stoical doctrine that all vice springs from ignorance that he derived his rule of life, and this doctrine, to which he repeatedly recurred, imparted to all his judgments a sad but tender charity. "Men were made for men; correct them, then, or support them."² "If they do ill, it is evidently in spite of themselves and through ignorance."³ "Correct them if you can; if not, remember that patience was given you to exercise it in their behalf."⁴ "It would be shameful for a physician to deem it strange that a man was suffering from fever."⁵ "The immortal gods consent for countless ages to endure without anger, and even to surround with blessings, so many and such wicked men; but

thou who hast so short a time to live, art thou already weary, and that when thou art thyself wicked?"⁶ "It is involuntarily that the soul is deprived of justice, and temperance, and goodness, and all other virtues. Continually remember this; the thought will make you more gentle to all mankind."⁷ "It is right that man should love those who have offended him. He will do so when he remembers that all men are his relations, and that it is through ignorance and involuntarily that they sin—and then we all die so soon."⁸

The character of the virtue of Marcus Aurelius, though exhibiting the softening influence of the Greek spirit which in his time pervaded the Empire, was in its essentials strictly Roman.⁴ Though full of reverential gratitude to Providence, we do not find in him that intense humility and that deep and subtle religious feeling which were the principles of Hebrew virtue, and which have given the Jewish writers so great an ascendancy over the hearts of men. Though borne naturally and instinctively to goodness, his *Meditations* do not display the keen æsthetic sense of the beauty of virtue which was the leading motive of Greek morals, and which the writings of Plotinus afterwards made very familiar to the Roman world. Like most of the best Romans, the principle of his virtue was the sense of duty, the conviction of the existence of a law of nature to which it is the aim and purpose of our being to conform. Of secondary motives he appears to have been little sensible. The belief in a superintending Providence was the strongest of his religious convictions, but even that was occasionally overcast. On the subject of a future world his mind floated in a desponding doubt. The desire for posthumous fame he deemed it his duty systematically to mortify. While most writers of his school regarded death chiefly as the end of sorrows, and dwell upon it in order to dispel its terrors, in Marcus Aurelius it is chiefly represented as the last great demonstration of the vanity of earthly things. Seldom,

¹ vii. 70.

² vii. 65.

³ vii. 22.

⁴ Mr. Maurice, in this respect, compares and contrasts him very happily with Plutarch. "Like Plutarch, the Greek and Roman characters were in Marcus Aurelius remarkably blended; but, unlike Plutarch, the foundation of his mind was Roman. He was a student that he might more effectually carry on the business of an emperor." (*Philosophy of the First Six Centuries*, p. 32.)

⁵ ix. 29. ⁶ viii. 59. ⁷ xi. 18. ⁸ ix. 11. ⁹ viii. 15.

indeed, has such active and unrelaxing virtue been united with so little enthusiasm, and been cheered by so little illusion of success. "There is but one thing," he wrote, "of real value—to cultivate truth and justice, and to live without anger in the midst of lying and unjust men."¹

The command he had acquired over his feelings was so great that it was said of him that his countenance was never known to betray either elation or despondency.² We, however, who have before us the records of his inner life, can have no difficulty in detecting the deep melancholy that overshadowed his mind, and his closing years were darkened by many and various sorrows. His wife, whom he dearly loved and deeply honoured, and who, if we may believe the Court scandals that are reported by historians, was not worthy of his affection,³ had preceded him to the tomb. His only surviving son had already displayed the vicious tendencies that afterwards made him one of the worst of rulers. The philosophers, who had instructed him in his youth, and to whom he had clung with an affectionate friendship, had one by one disappeared, and no new race had arisen to supply their place. After a long reign of self-denying virtue he saw the decadence of the Empire continually more apparent. The Stoical school was rapidly fading before the passion for Oriental superstitions. The barbarians, repelled for a time, were again menacing the frontiers, and it was not difficult to foresee their future triumph. The mass of the people had become too inert and too corrupt for any efforts to regenerate them. A fearful pestilence, followed by many minor calamities, had fallen upon the land and spread misery and panic through many provinces. In the midst of these calamities the emperor was struck down with a mortal illness, which he bore with the placid courage he had always dis-

played, exhibiting in almost the last words he uttered his forgetfulness of self and his constant anxiety for the condition of his people.⁴ Shortly before his death he dismissed his attendants, and, after one last interview, his son, and he died as he long had lived, alone.⁵

Thus sank to rest in clouds and darkness the purest and gentlest spirit of all the pagan world, the most perfect model of the later Stoics. In him the hardness, asperity, and arrogance of the sect had altogether disappeared, while the affectation its paradoxes tended to produce was greatly mitigated. Without fanaticism, superstition, or illusion, his whole life was regulated by a simple and unwavering sense of duty. The contemplative and emotional virtues which Stoicism had long depressed had regained their place, but the active virtues had not yet declined. The virtues of the hero were still deeply honoured, but gentleness and tenderness had acquired a new prominence in the ideal type.

But while the force of circumstances was thus developing the ethical conceptions of antiquity in new directions, the mass of the Roman people were plunged in a condition of depravity which no mere ethical teaching could adequately correct. The moral condition of the Empire is, indeed, in some respects one of the most appalling pictures on record, and writers have much more frequently undertaken to paint or even to exaggerate its enormity than to investigate the circumstances by which it may be explained. Such circumstances, however, must unquestionably exist. There is no reason to believe that the innate propensities of the people were worse during the Empire than during the best days of the Republic. The depravity of a nation is a phenomenon which, like all others, may be traced to definite causes, and in the instance before us they are not difficult to discover.

I have already said that the virtue of the Romans was a military and patriotic virtue, formed by the national institutions, and to which religious teaching was merely accessory. The domestic, military, and censorial discipline, concurring with the general poverty and also with the agricultural pursuits of the people, had created the simplest and

¹ v. 47.

² Capitolinus, Aurelius Victor.

³ M. Suckau, in his admirable *Étude sur Marc-Aurèle*, and M. Renan, in a very acute and learned *Examen de quelques faits relatifs à l'impératrice Faustine* (read before the Institut, August 14, 1867), have shown the extreme uncertainty of the stories about the debaucheries of Faustina, which the biographers of Marcus Aurelius have collected. It will be observed that the emperor himself has left an emphatic testimony to her virtue, and to the happiness he derived from her (I. 17); that the earliest extant biographer of Marcus Aurelius was a generation later; and that the infamous character of Commodus naturally predisposed men to imagine that he was not the son of so perfect an emperor.

⁴ "Quid me fle'is, et non magis de pestilentia et communi morte cogitatis?" (Capitolinus, *M. Aurelius*)

⁵ *Ibid.*

most austere habits, while the institutions of civic liberty provided ample spheres for honourable ambition. The nobles, being the highest body in a free state, and being at the same time continually confronted by a formidable opposition under the guidance of the tribunes, were ardently devoted to public life. The dangerous rivalry of the surrounding Italian States, and afterwards of Carthage, demanded and secured a constant vigilance. Roman education was skilfully designed to elicit heroic patriotism, and the great men of the past became the ideal figures of the imagination. Religion hallowed the local feeling by rites and legends, instituted many useful and domestic habits, taught men the sanctity of oaths, and, by fostering a continual sense of a superintending Providence, gave a depth and solemnity to the whole character.

Such were the chief influences by which the national type of virtue had been formed, but nearly all of these were corroded or perverted by advancing civilisation. The domestic and local religion lost its ascendancy amid the increase of scepticism and the invasion of a crowd of foreign superstitions. The simplicity of manners, which sumptuary laws and the institution of the censorship had long maintained, was replaced by the extravagances of a Babylonian luxury. The aristocratic dignity perished with the privileges on which it reposed. The patriotic energy and enthusiasm died away in a universal Empire which embraced all varieties of language, custom, and nationality.

But although the virtues of a poor and struggling community necessarily disappear before increasing luxury, they are in a normal condition of society replaced by virtues of a different stamp. Gentler manners and enlarged benevolence follow in the train of civilisation, greater intellectual activity and more extended industrial enterprise give a new importance to the moral qualities which each of these requires, the circle of political interests expands, and if the virtues that spring from privilege diminish, the virtues that spring from equality increase.

In Rome, however, there were three great causes which impeded the normal development—the Imperial system, the institution of slavery, and the gladiatorial shows. Each of these exercised an influence of the widest and most pernicious

character on the morals of the people. To trace those influences in all their ramifications would lead me far beyond the limits I have assigned to the present work, but I shall endeavour to give a concise view of their nature and general character.*

The theory of the Roman Empire was that of a representative despotism. The various offices of the Republic were not annihilated, but they were gradually concentrated in a single man. The Senate was still ostensibly the depository of supreme power, but it was made in fact the mere creature of the Emperor, whose power was virtually uncontrolled. Political spies and private accusers, who in the latter days of the Republic had been encouraged to denounce plots against the State, began under Augustus to denounce plots against the Emperor; and this class being enormously increased under Tiberius, and stimulated by the promise of part of the confiscated property, they menaced every leading politician, and even every wealthy man. The nobles were gradually depressed, ruined, or driven by the dangers of public life into orgies of private luxury. The poor were conciliated, not by any increase of liberty or even of permanent prosperity, but by gratuitous distributions of corn and by public games; while, in order to invest themselves with a sacred character, the emperors adopted the religious device of an apotheosis.

This last superstition, of which some traces may still be found in the titles appropriated to royalty, was not wholly a suggestion of politicians. Deified men had long occupied a prominent place in ancient belief, and the founders of cities had been very frequently worshipped by the inhabitants.¹ Although to more educated minds the ascription of divinity to a sovereign was simply an unmeaning flattery, although it in no degree prevented either innumerable plots against his life or an unsparing criticism of his memory, yet the popular reverence not unfrequently anticipated politicians in representing the emperor as in some special way under the protection of Providence. Around Augustus a whole constellation of miraculous stories soon clustered. An oracle, it was said, had declared his native city destined to produce a ruler of the world.

* Many examples of this are given by Coulanges, *La Cité antique*, pp. 177-178.

When a child, he had been borne by invisible hands from his cradle and placed on a lofty tower, where he was found with his face turned to the rising sun. He rebuked the frogs that croaked around his grandfather's home, and they became silent for ever. An eagle snatched a piece of bread from his hand, soared into the air, and then, descending, presented it to him again. Another eagle dropped at his feet a chicken, bearing a laurel-branch in its beak. When his body was burnt, his image was seen rising to heaven above the flames. When another man tried to sleep in the bed in which the Emperor had been born, the profane intruder was dragged forth by an unseen hand. A patrician named Lætorius, having been condemned for adultery, pleaded in mitigation of the sentence that he was the happy possessor of the spot of ground on which Augustus was born.¹ An Asiatic town, named Cyzicus, was deprived of its freedom by Tiberius, chiefly because it had neglected the worship of Augustus.² Partly, no doubt, by policy, but partly also by that spontaneous process by which in a superstitious age conspicuous characters so often become the nuclei of legends,³ each emperor was surrounded by a supernatural aureole. Every usurpation, every break in the ordinary line of succession, was adumbrated by a series of miracles; and signs, both in heaven and earth, were manifested whenever an emperor was about to die.

Of the emperors themselves, a great majority, no doubt, accepted their divine honours as an empty pageant, and more than one exhibited beneath the purple a simplicity of tastes and character which the boasted heroes of the Republic had never surpassed. It is related of Vespasian that, when dying, he jested mournfully on his approaching dignity, observing, as he felt his strength ebbing away, "I think I am becoming a god."⁴ Alexander Severus and Julian refused to accept the ordinary language of adulation, and of those who did not reject it we know that many looked upon it as a modern sovereign looks upon the phraseology of petitions or the ceremonies of the Court. Even Nero was so far from

being intoxicated with his Imperial dignity that he continually sought triumphs as a singer or an actor, and it was his artistic skill, not his divine prerogatives, that excited his vanity.⁵ Caligula, however, who appears to have been literally deranged,⁶ is said to have accepted his divinity as a serious fact, to have substituted his own head for that of Jupiter on many of the statues,⁷ and to have once started furiously from his seat during a thunderstorm that had interrupted a gladiatorial show, shouting with frantic gestures his imprecations against Heaven, and declaring that the divided empire was indeed intolerable, that either Jupiter or himself must speedily succumb.⁸ Heliogabalus, if we may give any credence to his biographer, confounded all things, human and divine, in hideous and blasphemous orgies, and designed to unite all forms of religion in the worship of himself.⁹

A curious consequence of this apotheosis was that the images of the emperors were invested with a sacred character like those of the gods. They were the recognised refuge of the slave or the oppressed,¹⁰ and the smallest disrespect to them was resented as a heinous crime. Under Tiberius, slaves and criminals were accustomed to hold in their hands an image of the emperor, and, being thus protected, to pour with impunity a torrent of defiant insolence upon their masters or judges.¹¹ Under the same emperor, a man having, when drunk, accidentally touched a nameless domestic utensil with a ring on which the head of the emperor was carved, he was immediately denounced by a spy.¹² A man in this reign was accused of high treason in having sold an image of the emperor with a garden.¹³ It was made a capital offence to beat a slave, or to undress, near a statue of Augustus, or to enter a brothel with a piece of money on which his head was engraved.¹⁴ And, at a later period, a woman, it is said, was actually executed

¹ "Qualis art sex pereio" were his dying words.

² See Sueton. *Calig.* i.

³ Sueton. *Calig.* xxi. A statue of Jupiter is said to have burst out laughing just before the death of this emperor.

⁴ Seneca, *De Ira*, i. 6, Sueton. *Calig.* xxii.

⁵ Lampridius, *Heliogab.*

⁶ Senec. *De Clem.* i. 18.

⁷ Tacit. *Annal.* iii. 36.

⁸ Senec. *De Benefic.* i. 25.

⁹ Tacit. *Annal.* i. 73. Tiberius refused to allow this case to be proceeded with. See, too, Pausan. *Apollonius of Tyana*, i. 15.

¹⁰ Suet. *Tiber.* lvi.

¹ All this is related by Suetonius *August.*

² Tacit. *Annal.* i. 36.

³ See, e.g., the sentiments of the people about Julius Cæsar, Sueton. *J. C.* lxxviii.

⁴ Sueton. *Vesp.* xxiii.

for undressing before the statue of Domitian.¹

It may easily be conceived that men who had been raised to this pinnacle of arrogance and power, men who exercised uncontrolled authority in the midst of a society in a state of profound corruption, were often guilty of the most atrocious extravagances. In the first period of the Empire more especially, when traditions were not yet formed, and when experience had not yet shown the dangers of the throne, the brains of some of its occupants reeled at their elevation, and a kind of moral insanity ensued. The pages of Suetonius remain as an eternal witness of the abysses of depravity, the hideous, intolerable cruelty, the hitherto unimagined extravagances of nameless lust that were then manifested on the Palatine; and while they cast a fearful light upon the moral chaos into which pagan society had sunk, they furnish ample evidence of the demoralising influences of the Empire. The throne was, it is true, occupied by some of the best as well as by some of the worst men who have ever lived; but the evil, though checked and mitigated, was never abolished. The corruption of a Court, the formation of a profession of spies, the encouragement given to luxury, the distributions of corn, and the multiplication of games, were evils which varied greatly in their degrees of intensity, but the very existence of the Empire prevented the creation of those habits of political life which formed the moral type of the great republics of antiquity. Liberty, which is often very unfavourable to theological systems, is almost always in the end favourable to morals; for the most effectual method that has been devised for diverting men from vice is to give free scope to a higher ambition. This scope was absolutely wanting in the Roman Empire, and the moral condition, in the absence of lasting political habits, fluctuated greatly with the character of the emperors.

The results of the institution of slavery were probably even more serious. In addition to its manifest effect in encouraging a tyrannical and ferocious spirit in the masters, it cast a stigma upon all labour, and at once degraded and impoverished the free poor. In

modern societies the formation of an influential and numerous middle class, trained in the sober and regular habits of industrial life, is the chief guarantee of national morality, and where such a class exists, the disorders of the upper ranks, though undoubtedly injurious, are never fatal to society. The influence of great outbursts of fashionable depravity, such as that which followed the Restoration in England, is rarely more than superficial. The aristocracy may revel in every excess of ostentatious vice, but the great mass of the people, at the loom, the counter, or the plough, continue unaffected by their example, and the habits of life into which they are forced by the condition of their trades preserve them from gross depravity. It is the most frightful feature of the corruption of ancient Rome that it extended through every class of the community. In the absence of all but the simplest machinery, manufactures, with the vast industrial life they beget, were unknown. The poor citizen found almost all the spheres in which an honourable livelihood might be obtained wholly or at least in a very great degree preoccupied by slaves, while he had learnt to regard trade with an invincible repugnance. Hence followed the immense increase of corrupt and corrupting professions, as actors, pantomimes, hired gladiators, political spies, ministers to passion, astrologers, religious charlatans, pseudo-philosophers, which gave the free classes a precarious and occasional subsistence, and hence, too, the gigantic dimensions of the system of clientage. Every rich man was surrounded by a train of dependants, who lived in a great measure at his expense, and spent their lives in ministering to his passions and flattering his vanity. And, above all, the public distribution of corn, and occasionally of money, was carried on to such an extent that, so far as the first necessities of life were concerned, the whole poor free population of Rome was supported gratuitously by the Government. To effect this distribution promptly and lavishly was the main object of the Imperial policy, and its consequences were worse than could have resulted from the most extravagant poor-laws or the most excessive charity. The mass of the people were supported in absolute idleness by corn, which was given without any reference to desert, and was received, not as a favour, but

¹ "Mulier quædam, quod semel exuerat ante statuam Domitiani, damnata et interfecta est." (Zephilin, lxxv. 12)

as a right; while gratuitous public amusements still further diverted them from labour.

Under these influences the population rapidly dwindled away. Productive enterprise was almost extinct in Italy, and an unexampled concurrence of causes made a vicious celibacy the habitual condition. Already in the days of Augustus the evil was apparent, and the dangers which in later reigns drove the patricians still more generally from public life, drove them more and more into every extravagance of sensuality. Greece, since the destruction of her liberty, and also the leading cities of Asia Minor and of Egypt, had become centres of the wildest corruption, and Greek and Oriental captives were innumerable in Rome. Ionian slaves of a surpassing beauty, Alexandrian slaves, famous for their subtle skill in stimulating the jaded senses of the confirmed and sated libertine, became the ornaments of every patrician house, the companions and the instructors of the young. The disinclination to marriage was so general that men who spent their lives in endeavouring by flatteries to secure the inheritance of wealthy bachelors became a numerous and a notorious class. The slave population was itself a hotbed of vice, and it contaminated all with which it came in contact; while the attractions of the games, and especially of the public baths, which became the habitual resort of the idle, combined with the charms of the Italian climate, and with the miserable domestic architecture that was general, to draw the poor citizens from indoor life. Idleness, amusements, and a bare subsistence were alone desired, and the general practice of abortion among the rich, and of infanticide and exposition in all classes, still further checked the population.

The destruction of all public spirit in a population so situated was complete and inevitable. In the days of the Republic a consul had once advocated the admission of a brave Italian people to the right of Roman citizenship, on the ground that "those who thought only of liberty deserved to be Romans."¹ In the Empire all liberty was cheerfully bartered for games and corn, and the worst tyrant

could by these means be secure of popularity. In the Republic, when Marius threw open the houses of those he had proscribed, to be plundered the people, by a noble abstinence, rebuked the act, for no Roman could be found to avail himself of the permission.² In the Empire, when the armies of Vitellius and Vespasian were disputing the possession of the city, the degenerate Romans gathered with delight to the spectacle as to a gladiatorial show, plundered the deserted houses, encouraged either army by their reckless plaudits, dragged out the fugitives to be slain, and converted into a festival the calamity of their country.³ The degradation of the national character was permanent. Neither the teaching of the Stoics, nor the government of the Antonines, nor the triumph of Christianity could restore it. Indifferent to liberty, the Roman now, as then, asks only for an idle subsistence and for public spectacles, and countless monasteries and ecclesiastical pageants occupy in modern Rome the same place as did the distributions of corn and the games of the amphitheatre in the Rome of the Cæsars.

It must be remembered, too, that while public spirit had thus decayed in the capital of the Empire, there existed no independent or rival power to reanimate by its example the smouldering flame. The existence in modern Europe of many distinct nations on the same level of civilisation, but with different forms of government and conditions of national life, secures the permanence of some measure of patriotism and liberty. If these perish in one nation, they survive in another, and each people affects those about it by its rivalry or example. But an Empire which comprised all the civilised globe could know nothing of this political interaction. In religious, social, intellectual, and moral life, foreign ideas were very discernible, but the enslaved provinces could have no influence in rekindling political life in the centre, and those which rivalled Italy in their civilisation, even surpassed it in their corruption and their servility.

In reviewing, however, the conditions upon which the moral state of the Empire depended, there are still two very important centres or seed-plots of virtue to

¹ "Eos demum, qui nihil præterquam de libertate cogitent, dignos esse, qui Romani fiant." (Livy, vi. 21.)

² Valerius Maximus, iv. 3, § 14.

³ See the picture of this scene in Tacitus, *Hist.* vi. 82.

which it is necessary to advert. I mean the pursuit of agriculture and the discipline of the army. A very early tradition, which was attributed to Romulus, had declared that warfare and agriculture were the only honourable occupations for a citizen,¹ and it would be difficult to overrate the influence of the last in forming temperate and virtuous habits among the people. It is the subject of the only extant work of the elder Cato. Virgil had adorned it with the lustre of his poetry. A very large part of the Roman religion was intended to symbolise its stages or consecrate its operations. Varro expressed an eminently Roman sentiment in that beautiful sentence which Cowper has introduced into English poetry: "Divine Providence made the country, but human art the town."² The reforms of Vespasian consisted chiefly of the elevation to high positions of the agriculturists of the provinces. Antoninus, who was probably the most perfect of all the Roman emperors, was through his whole reign a zealous farmer.

As far as the distant provinces were concerned, it is probable that the Imperial system was on the whole a good. The scandalous rapacity of the provincial governors, which disgraced the closing years of the Republic, and which is immortalised by the indignant eloquence of Cicero, appears to have ceased, or at least greatly diminished, under the supervision of the emperors. Ample municipal freedom, good roads, and for the most part wise and temperate rulers, secured for the distant sections of the Empire a large measure of prosperity. But in Italy itself agriculture, with the habits of life that attended it, speedily and fatally decayed. The peasant proprietor soon glided hopelessly into debt. The immense advantages which slavery gave the rich gradually threw nearly all the Italian soil into their hands. The peasant who ceased to be a proprietor found himself excluded by slave labour from the position of a hired cultivator, while the gratuitous distributions of corn drew him readily to the metropolis. The gigantic scale of these distributions induced the rulers to obtain their corn in the form of a tribute from distant countries, chiefly from Africa and Sicily, and it almost ceased to be cultivated in Italy. The land fell to

waste, or was cultivated by slaves or converted into pasture, and over vast tracts the race of free peasants entirely disappeared.

This great revolution, which profoundly affected the moral condition of Italy, had long been impending. The debts of the poor peasants, and the tendency of the patricians to monopolise the conquered territory, had occasioned some of the fiercest contests of the Republic, and in the earliest days of the Empire the blight that seemed to have fallen on the Italian soil was continually and pathetically lamented. Livy, Varro, Columella, and Pliny have noticed it in the most emphatic terms,³ and Tacitus observed that as early as the reign of Claudius, Italy, which had once supplied the distant provinces with corn, had become dependent for the very necessities of life upon the winds and the waves.⁴ The evil was, indeed, of an almost hopeless kind. Adverse winds, or any other accidental interruption of the convoys of corn, occasioned severe distress in the capital; but the prospect of the calamities that would ensue if any misfortune detached the great corn-growing countries from the Empire might well have appalled the politician. Yet the combined influence of slavery, and of the gratuitous distributions of corn, acting in the manner I have described, rendered every effort to revive Italian agriculture abortive; and slavery had taken such deep root that it would have been impossible to abolish it, while no emperor dared to encounter the calamities and rebellion that would follow a suspension or even a restriction of the distributions.⁵ Many serious efforts were made to remedy the evil.⁶ Alexander Severus advanced money to the poor to buy portions of land, and accepted a gradual payment without interest from the produce of the soil. Pertinax settled poor men as proprietors

¹ See a collection of passages from these writers in Wallon, *Hist. de l'Esclavage*, tome ii. pp. 378-379. Pliny, in the first century, noticed (*Hist. Nat.* xviii. 7) that the *latifundia*, or system of large properties, was ruining both Italy and the provinces, and that six landlords whom Nero killed were the possessors of half Roman Africa.

² Tacit. *Annal.* xii. 43. The same complaint had been made still earlier by Tiberius, in a letter to the Senate. (*Annal.* iii. 54.)

³ Augustus, for a time, contemplated abolishing the distributions, but soon gave up the idea. (Suet. *Aug.* xlii.) He noticed that it had the effect of causing the fields to be neglected.

⁴ M. Wallon has carefully traced this history. (*Hist. de l'Esclav.* tome. iii. pp. 294-297.)

⁵ Dion. Halicarnass.

⁶ "Divina Natura dedit agros; ars humana edificavit urbes."

on deserted land, on the sole condition that they should cultivate it. Marcus Aurelius began, and Aurelian and Valentinian continued, the system of settling great numbers of barbarian captives upon the Italian soil, and compelling them as slaves to till it. The introduction of this large foreign element into the heart of Italy was eventually one of the causes of the downfall of the Empire, and it is also about this time that we first dimly trace the condition of serfdom or servitude to the soil into which slavery afterwards faded, and which was for some centuries the general condition of the European poor. But the economical and moral causes that were destroying agriculture in Italy were too strong to be resisted, and the simple habits of life which agricultural pursuits promote had little or no place in the later Empire.

A somewhat less rapid, but not less complete, decadence had taken place in military life. The Roman army was at first recruited exclusively from the upper classes, and the service, which lasted only during actual warfare, was gratuitous. Before the close of the Republic, however, these conditions had disappeared. Military pay is said to have been instituted at the time of the siege of Veii.¹ Some Spaniards who were enrolled during the rivalry of Rome and Carthage were the first example of the employment of foreign mercenaries by the former.² Marius abolished the property qualification of the recruits.³ In long residences in Spain and in the Asiatic provinces discipline gradually relaxed, and the historian who traced the progress of Oriental luxury in Rome dwelt with a just emphasis upon the ominous fact that it had first been introduced into the city by soldiers.⁴ The civil wars contributed to the destruction of the old military traditions, but being conducted by able generals it is probable that they had more effect upon the patriotism than upon the discipline of the army. Augustus reorganised the whole military system, establishing a body of soldiers known as the Prætorian Guard, and dignified with some special privileges, permanently in Rome, while the other legions were chiefly mustered upon the frontiers. During his long reign, and during that of Tiberius, both

sections were quiescent, but the murder of Caligula by his soldiers opened a considerable period of insubordination. Claudius, it was observed, first set the fatal example of purchasing his safety from his soldiers by bribes.¹ The armies of the provinces soon discovered that it was possible to elect an emperor outside Rome, and Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian were all the creatures of revolt. The evil was, however, not yet past recovery. Vespasian and Trajan enforced discipline with great stringency and success. The emperors began more frequently to visit the camps. The number of the soldiers was small, and for some time the turbulence subsided. The history of the worst period of the Empire, it has been truly observed, is full of instances of brave soldiers trying, under circumstances of extreme difficulty, simply to do their duty. But the historian had soon occasion to notice again the profound influence of the voluptuous Asiatic cities upon the legions.² Removed for many years from Italy, they lost all national pride, their allegiance was transferred from the sovereign to the general, and when the Imperial sceptre fell into the hands of a succession of incompetent rulers, they habitually urged their commanders to revolt, and at last reduced the Empire to a condition of military anarchy. A remedy was found for this evil, though not for the luxurious habits that had been acquired, in the division of the Empire, which placed each army under the direct supervision of an emperor; and it is probable that at a later period Christianity diminished the insubordination, though it may have also diminished the military fire of the soldiers.³ But other and still more powerful causes were in operation preparing the military downfall of Rome. The habits of inactivity which the Imperial policy had produced, and which,

¹ "Primas Cæsarom fidem militis etiam præmio præteritum." (Suet. *Claud.* 2.)

² See Tacitus, *Ann.* xii. 35, *Hist.* i. 69.

³ M. Sarronchi thinks that the influence of Christianity in subduing the spirit of revolt, if not in the army, at least in the people, was very great. He says—

"Il est remarquable qu'en cinq ans, sept prêtres d'ars au trône, tous bien supérieurs à Honorius en courage, en talents et en vertus, furent successivement envoyés captifs à Ravenne ou punis de mort, que le peuple applaudit toujours à ces jugemens et ne se sépara point de l'autorité légitime, tant la doctrine ou droit divin des rois, que les évêques avoient commencé à prêcher sous Théodose avoit fait de progrès, et tant le monde romain sembloit déterminé à périr avec un monarque imbecile, plutôt que tenté de se donner un sauveur." (*Hist. de la Chute de l'Empire romain*, tome i. p. 221.)

¹ Livy, iv. 59-60. Florus, i. 12.

² Salust, *Bell. Jugurth.* 84-86.

³ Livy, xlii. 49.

⁴ Livy, xxxix. 6.

through a desire for popularity, most emperors laboured to encourage, led to a profound disinclination for the hardships of military life. Even the Prætorian Guard, which was long exclusively Italian, was selected after Septimius Severus from the legions on the frontiers;¹ while, Italy being relieved from the regular conscription, these were recruited solely in the provinces, and innumerable barbarians were subsidised. The political and military consequences of this change are sufficiently obvious. In an age when, artillery being unknown, the military superiority of civilised nations over barbarians was far less than at present, the Italians had become absolutely unaccustomed to real war, and had acquired habits that were beyond all others incompatible with military discipline, while many of the barbarians who menaced and at last subverted the Empire had been actually trained by Roman generals. The moral consequence is equally plain—military discipline, like agricultural labour, ceased to have any part among the moral influences of Italy.

To those who have duly estimated the considerations I have enumerated, the downfall and moral debasement of the Empire can cause no surprise, though they may justly wonder that its agony should have been so protracted, that it should have produced a multitude of good and great men, both pagan and Christian, and that these should have exercised so wide an influence as they unquestionably did. Almost every institution or pursuit by which virtuous habits would naturally have been formed had been tainted or destroyed, while agencies of terrific power were impelling the people to vice. The rich, excluded from most honourable paths of ambition, and surrounded by countless parasites who inflamed their every passion, found themselves absolute masters of innumerable slaves who were their willing ministers, and often their teachers, in vice. The poor, hating industry and destitute of all intellectual resources, lived in habitual idleness, and looked upon abject servility as the normal road to fortune. But the picture becomes truly appalling when we remember that the main amusement of both classes was the spectacle of blood-

shed, of the death, and sometimes of the torture, of men.

The gladiatorial games form, indeed, the one feature of Roman society which to a modern mind is almost inconceivable in its atrocity. That not only men, but women, in an advanced period of civilisation—men and women who not only professed, but very frequently acted upon, a high code of morals—should have made the carnage of men their habitual amusement, that all this should have continued for centuries, with scarcely a protest, is one of the most startling facts in moral history. It is, however, perfectly normal, and in no degree inconsistent with the doctrine of natural moral perceptions, while it opens out fields or ethical enquiry of a very deep though painful interest.

These games, which long eclipsed, both in interest and in influence, every other form of public amusement at Rome,² were originally religious ceremonies celebrated at the tombs of the great, and intended as human sacrifices to appease the Manes of the dead.³ They were afterwards defended as a means of sustaining the military spirit by the constant spectacle of courageous death,⁴ and with this object it was customary to give a gladiatorial show to soldiers before their departure to a war.⁴ In addition

¹ The gladiatorial shows are treated incidentally by most Roman historians, but the three works from which I have derived most assistance in this part of my subject are the *Saturnalia* of Justus Lipsius, Magnin, *Origines du Théâtre* (an extremely learned and interesting book, which was unhappily never completed), and Friedländer's *Roman Manners from Augustus to the Antonines* (the second volume of the French translation). M. Wallon has also compressed into a few pages (*Hist. de l'Esclavage*, tome. ii. pp. 129-139) much information on the subject.

² Hence the old name of *bustuaris* (from *bustum*, a funeral pile) given to gladiators (Nieupoort, *De Ritibus Romanorum*, p. 514). According to Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* xxx. 3), "regular human sacrifices were only abolished in Rome by a decree of the Senate, B.C. 97," and there are some instances of them at a still later period. Much information about them is collected by Sir C. Lewis, *Credibility of Roman History*, vol. ii. p. 430; Merivale, *Conversion of the Roman Empire*, pp. 230-233; Legendre, *Traité de l'Opinion*, vol. i. pp. 229-231. Porphyry, in his *De Abstinencia Carnis*, devoted considerable research to this matter. Games were habitually celebrated by wealthy private individuals, during the early part of the Empire, at the funerals of their relatives, but their mortuary character gradually ceased, and after Marcus Aurelius they had become mere public spectacles, and were rarely celebrated at Rome by private men. (See Wallon, *Hist. de l'Esclavage*, tome ii. pp. 135-136.) The games had then really passed into their purely secular stage, though they were still nominally dedicated to Mars and Diana, and though an altar of Jupiter Latiaris stood in the centre of the arena. (Nieupoort, p. 365.)

³ Cicero, *Tusc.* lib. ii.

⁴ Capitolinus, *Maximus et Balbinus*. Capitolinus

¹ See Gibbon, ch. v.; Merivale's *Hist. of Rome*, ch. lxvii. It was thought that troops thus selected would be less likely to revolt. Constantine abolished the Prætorians.

to these functions they had a considerable political importance, for at a time when all the regular organs of liberty were paralysed or abolished, the ruler was accustomed in the arena to meet tens of thousands of his subjects, who availed themselves of the opportunity to present their petitions, to declare their grievances, and to censure freely the sovereign or his ministers.¹ The games are said to have been of Etruscan origin; they were first introduced into Rome, B.C. 264, when the two sons of a man named Brutus compelled three pairs of gladiators to fight at the funeral of their father,² and before the close of the Republic they were common on great public occasions, and, what appears even more horrible, at the banquets of the nobles.³ The rivalry of Cæsar and Pompey greatly multiplied them, for each sought by this means to ingratiate himself with the people. Pompey introduced a new form of combat between men and animals.⁴ Cæsar abolished the old custom of restricting the mortuary games to the funerals of men, and his daughter was the first Roman lady whose tomb was desecrated by human blood.⁵ Besides this innovation, Cæsar replaced the temporary edifices in which the games had hitherto been held by a permanent wooden amphitheatre, shaded the spectators by an awning of precious silk, compelled the condemned persons on one occasion to fight with silver lances,⁶ and drew so many gladiators into the city that the Senate was obliged to issue an enactment restricting their number.⁷ In the

earliest years of the Empire, Statilius Taurus erected the first amphitheatre of stone.⁸ Augustus ordered that not more than 120 men should fight on a single occasion, and that no prætor should give more than two spectacles in a single year,⁹ and Tiberius again fixed the maximum of combatants;¹⁰ but, notwithstanding these attempts to limit them, the games soon acquired the most gigantic proportions. They were celebrated habitually by great men in honour of their dead relatives, by officials on coming into office, by conquerors to secure popularity, and on every occasion of public rejoicing, and by rich tradesmen who were desirous of acquiring a social position.¹¹ They were also among the attractions of the public baths. Schools of gladiators—often the private property of rich citizens—existed in every leading city of Italy, and, besides slaves and criminals, they were thronged with free-men, who voluntarily hired themselves for a term of years. In the eyes of multitudes, the large sums that were paid to the victor, the patronage of nobles and often of emperors, and still more the delirium of popular enthusiasm that centred upon the successful gladiator, outweighed all the dangers of the profession. A complete recklessness of life was soon engendered both in the spectators and the combatants. The "lanistæ," or purveyors of gladiators, became an important profession. Wandering bands of gladiators traversed Italy, hiring themselves for the provincial amphitheatres. The influence of the games gradually pervaded the whole texture of Roman life. They became the common-place of conversation.¹² The children imitated them in their play.¹³ The philosophers drew from them their metaphors and illustrations. The artists

says this is the most probable origin of the custom, though others regarded it as a sacrifice to appease Nemesis by an offering of blood.

¹ Much curious information on this subject may be found in Friedländer, *Mœurs romaines*, liv. vi. ch. 1. Very few Roman emperors ventured to disregard or to repress these outcries, and they led to the fall of several of the most powerful ministers of the Empire. On the whole these games represent the struggle and most ghastly form political liberty has ever assumed. On the other hand, the people readily bartered all genuine freedom for abundant games.

² Valer. Maximus, iv. 4. § 7.

³ On the gladiators at banquets, see J. L. Rousset, *Saturnalia*, lib. l. c. vi.; Magnin, *Origines du Théâtre*, pp. 380-385. This was originally an Etruscan custom, and it was also very common at Capua. Asinius Pollio says—

"Exhilarare vins convivia cæde

Mos olim, et miscere epulis spectacula dira."

Verus, the colleague of Marcus Aurelius, was especially addicted to this kind of entertainment. (Capitolinus, *Verus*.) See, too, Athenæus, iv. 40, 41.

⁴ Senec. *De Brevit. Vit.* c. xii.

⁵ Sueton. *J. Cæsar*, xxvi. Pliny (*Ep.* vi. 34) commends a friend for having given a show in memory of his departed wife.

⁶ Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* xxxii. 16.

⁷ Sueton. *Cæsar*, x.; Dion Cassius, lxxii. 24.

⁸ Sueton. *Aug.* xvix. The history of the amphitheatres is given very minutely by Friedländer, who, like nearly all other antiquaries, believes this to have been the first of stone. Pliny mentions the existence, at an earlier period, of two connected wooden theatres, which swung round on hinges and formed an amphitheatre. (*Hist. Nat.* xxvii. 21.)

⁹ Dion Cassius, lib. ii. It appears, however, from an inscription, that 10,000 gladiators fought in the arena and by the command of Augustus. Wallon, *Hist. de l'Époque*, tome. i., p. 133.

¹⁰ Sueton. *Tiber.* xxv. Nero made another slight restriction (*Tact. Annal.* xiii. 31), which appears to have been little observed.

¹¹ Martial notices (*Ep.* ii. 50) and ridicules a spectacle given by a shoemaker at Bologna, and by a fuller at Modena.

¹² Epictetus, *Enchir.* xviii. § 2.

¹³ Arrian, iii. 15.

portrayed them in every variety of ornament.² The vestal virgins had a seat of honour in the arena.³ The Colosseum, which is said to have been capable of containing more than 80,000 spectators, eclipsed every other monument of Imperial splendour, and is even now at once the most imposing and the most characteristic relic of pagan Rome.

In the provinces the same passion was displayed. From Gaul to Syria, wherever the Roman influence extended, the spectacles of blood were introduced, and the gigantic remains of amphitheatres in many lands still attest by their ruined grandeur the scale on which they were pursued. In the reign of Tiberius, more than 20,000 persons are said to have perished by the fall of the amphitheatre at the suburban town of Fidenæ.⁴ Under Nero, the Syracusans obtained, as a special favour, an exemption from the law which limited the number of gladiators.⁵ Of the vast train of prisoners brought by Titus from Judea, a large proportion were destined by the conqueror for the provincial games.⁶ In Syria, where they were introduced by Antiochus Epiphanes, they at first produced rather terror than pleasure; but the effeminate Syrians soon learned to contemplate them with a passionate enjoyment,⁶ and on a single occasion Agrippa caused 1,400 men to fight in the amphitheatre at Berytus.⁷ Greece alone was in some degree an exception. When an attempt was made to introduce the spectacle into Athens, the Cynic philosopher Demonax appealed successfully to the better feelings of the people by exclaiming, "You must first overthrow the altar of Pity."⁸ The games are said to have afterwards penetrated to Athens, and to have been suppressed by Apollonius of Tyana;⁹ but with the exception of Corinth, where a very large foreign population existed, Greece never appears

to have shared the general enthusiasm.

One of the first consequences of this taste was to render the people absolutely unfit for those tranquil and refined amusements which usually accompany civilisation. To men who were accustomed to witness the fierce vicissitudes of deadly combat, any spectacle that did not elicit the strongest excitement was insipid. The only amusements that at all rivalled the spectacles of the amphitheatre and the circus were those which appealed strongly to the sensual passions, such as the games of Flora, the postures of the pantomimes, and the ballet.¹⁰ Roman comedy, indeed, flourished for a short period, but only by throwing itself into the same career. The pander and the courtesan are the leading characters of Plautus, and the more modest Terence never attained an equal popularity. The different forms of vice have a continual tendency to act and react upon one another, and the intense craving after excitement which the amphitheatre must necessarily have produced, had probably no small influence in stimulating the orgies of sensuality which Tacitus and Suetonius describe.

But if comedy could to a certain extent flourish with the gladiatorial games, it was not so with tragedy. It is, indeed, true that the tragic actor can exhibit displays of more intense agony and of a grander heroism than were ever witnessed in the arena. His mission is not to paint nature as it exists in the light of day, but nature as it exists in the heart of man. His gestures, his tones, his looks, are such as would never have been exhibited by the person he represents, but they display to the audience the full intensity of the emotions which that person would have felt, but which he would have been unable adequately to reveal. But to those who were habituated to the intense realism of the amphitheatre, the idealised suffering of the stage was unimpressive. All the genius

² See these points minutely proved in Friedländer.

³ Suet. *Aug.* xlv. This was noticed before by Cicero. The Christian poet Prudentius dwelt on this aspect of the games in some forcible lines —

"Virgo modica jubet converso pollice rumpi
Ne lateat pars ulla animæ vultibus imis
Altius impresso dum palpat ense secutor."

⁴ Sueton. *Tiberius*, xl. Tacitus, who gives a graphic description of the disaster (*Annal.* iv. 62-63), says 50,000 persons were killed or wounded.

⁵ Tacit. *Annal.* xiii. 49

⁶ Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* vi. 9.

⁷ See the very curious picture which Livy has given (xl. 22) of the growth of the fascination.

⁸ Joseph. *Antiq. Jud.* xiv. 7

⁹ Lucian, *Demonax*. ¹⁰ Philost. *Apoll.* iv. 22.

¹ Friedländer, tome ii pp. 95-96. There are, however, several ancient Greek inscriptions relating to gladiators, and proving the existence of the shows in Greece. Pompeii, which was a Greek colony, had a vast amphitheatre, which we may still admire; and, under Nero, games were prohibited at Pompeii for ten years, in consequence of a riot that broke out during a gladiatorial show. (Tacit. *Annal.* xiv. 17.) After the defeat of Perseus, Paulus Emilius celebrated a show in Macedonia. (Livy, xli. 20.)

² These are fully discussed by Magnin and Friedländer. There is a very beautiful description of a ballet, representing the "Judgment of Paris," in Apuleius, *Metamorph.* x.

of a Siddons or a Ristori would fail to move an audience who had continually seen living men fall bleeding and mangled at their feet. One of the first functions of the stage is to raise to the highest point the susceptibility to disgust. When Horace said that Medea should not kill her children upon the stage, he enunciated not a mere arbitrary rule, but one which grows necessarily out of the development of the drama. It is an essential characteristic of a refined and cultivated taste to be shocked and offended at the spectacle of bloodshed; and the theatre, which somewhat dangerously dissociates sentiment from action, and causes men to waste their compassion on ideal sufferings, is at least a barrier against the extreme forms of cruelty by developing this susceptibility to the highest degree. The gladiatorial games, on the other hand, destroyed all sense of disgust, and therefore all refinement of taste, and they rendered the permanent triumph of the drama impossible.¹

It is abundantly evident, both from history and from present experience, that the instinctive shock, or natural feeling of disgust, caused by the sight of the sufferings of men is not generically different from that which is caused by the sight of the sufferings of animals. The latter, to those who are not accustomed to it, is intensely painful. The former continually becomes by use a matter of absolute indifference. If the repugnance which is felt in the one case appears greater than in the other, it is not on account of any innate sentiment which commands us to revere our species, but simply because our imagination finds less difficulty in realising human than animal suffering; and also because education has strengthened our feelings in the one case much more than in the other. There is, however, no fact more clearly established than that when men have regarded it as not a crime to kill some class of their fellow-men, they have soon learnt to do so with no more natural compunction or hesitation than they would exhibit in killing a wild animal. This is the normal condition of

savage men. Colonists and Red Indians even now often shoot each other with precisely the same indifference as they shoot beasts of prey, and the whole history of warfare—especially when warfare was conducted on more savage principles than at present—is an illustration of the fact. Startling, therefore, as it may now appear, it is in no degree unnatural that Roman spectators should have contemplated with perfect equanimity the slaughter of men. The Spaniard, who is brought in infancy to the bull-ring, soon learns to gaze with indifference or pleasure upon sights before which the unpractised eye of the stranger quails with horror; and the same process would be equally efficacious had the spectacle been the sufferings of men.

We now look back with indignation upon this indifference, but yet, although it may be hard to realise, it is probably true that there is scarcely a human being who might not by custom be so indurated as to share it. Had the most benevolent person lived in a country in which the innocence of these games was deemed axiomatic, had he been taken to them in his very childhood and accustomed to associate them with his earliest dreams of romance, and had he then been left simply to the play of the emotions, the first paroxysm of horror would have soon subsided, the shrinking repugnance that followed would have grown weaker and weaker, the feeling of interest would have been aroused, and the tone would probably come in which it would reign alone. But even this absolute indifference to the sight of human suffering does not represent the full evil resulting from the gladiatorial games. That some men are so constituted as to be capable of taking a real and lively pleasure in the simple contemplation of suffering as suffering, and without any reference to their own interests, is a proposition which has been strenuously denied by those in whose eyes vice is nothing more than a displacement, or exaggeration, of lawful self-regarding feelings, and others, who have admitted the reality of the phenomenon, have treated it as a very rare and exceptional disease.² That it is so—at least in its extreme forms—in the present

¹ Pacuvius and Accius were the founders of Roman tragedy. The abridger, Velieus Paterculus, who is the only Roman historian who pays any attention to literary history, boasts that the latter might rank honourably with the best Greek tragedians. He adds, "ut in illis [the Greeks] imago, in hoc poene plus videtur fuisse sanguinis" (*Hist. Rom.* ii. 9).

² Thus, e.g., Hobbes: "Ad quædam ita contemplatus committitur crudelitas, proindeque a proprio securitatis opinione. Nam ut aliquis sibi placeat in malis alienis, sine alio fine, videtur mihi impossibile" (*Leviathan*, pars i. c. v.).

condition of society, may reasonably be hoped, though I imagine that few persons who have watched the habits of boys would question that to take pleasure in giving at least some degree of pain is sufficiently common, and though it is not quite certain that all the sports of adult men would be entered into with exactly the same zest if their victims were not sentient beings. But in every society in which atrocious punishments have been common, this side of human nature has acquired an undoubted prominence. It is related of Claudius that his special delight at the gladiatorial shows was in watching the countenances of the dying, for he had learnt to take an artistic pleasure in observing the variations of their agony.² When the gladiator lay prostrate it was customary for the spectators to give the sign with their thumbs, indicating whether they desired him to be spared or slain, and the giver of the show reaped most popularity when, in the latter case, he permitted no consideration of economy to make him hesitate to sanction the popular award.³

Besides this, the mere desire for novelty impelled the people to every excess or refinement of barbarity.³ The simple combat became at last insipid, and every variety of atrocity was devised to stimulate the flagging interest. At one time a bear and a bull, chained together, rolled in fierce contest along the sand; at another, criminals dressed in the skins of wild beasts were thrown to bulls, which were maddened by red-hot irons, or by darts tipped with burning pitch. Four hundred bears were killed on a single day under Caligula; three hundred on another day under Claudius. Under Nero, four hundred tigers fought with bulls and elephants; four hundred bears and three hundred lions were slaughtered by his soldiers. In a single day, at the dedication of the Colosseum by Titus, five thousand animals perished. Under Trajan the games continued for one hundred and twenty-three successive days.⁴ Lions,

tigers, elephants, rhinoceroses, hippopotami, giraffes, bulls, stags, even crocodiles and serpents, were employed to give novelty to the spectacle. Nor was any form of human suffering wanting. The first Gordian, when edile, gave twelve spectacles, in each of which from one hundred and fifty to five hundred pairs of gladiators appeared.⁵ Eight hundred pairs fought at the triumph of Aurelian.⁶ Ten thousand men fought during the games of Trajan.⁷ Nero illumined his gardens during the night by Christians burning in their pitchy shirts.⁸ Under Domitian an army of feeble dwarfs was compelled to fight,⁹ and, more than once, female gladiators descended to perish in the arena.¹⁰ A criminal personating a fictitious character was nailed to a cross, and there torn by a bear.¹¹ Another, representing Scavola, was compelled to hold his hand in a real flame.¹² A third, as Hercules, was burnt alive upon the pile.¹³ So intense was the craving for blood that a prince was less unpopular if he neglected the distribution of corn than if he neglected the games; and Nero himself, on account of his munificence in this respect, was probably the sovereign

ties on the subject. (*Origines du Théâtre*, pp. 445-453.) M. Mongez has devoted an interesting memoir to "Les animaux promenés ou tués dans le cirque." (*Mém. de l'Acad. des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres*, tome x.) See, too, Friedländer. Pliny rarely gives an account of any wild animal without accompanying it by statistics about its appearances in the arena. The first instance of a wild beast hunt in the amphitheatre is said to be that recorded by Livy (xxix. 22), which took place about 80 B.C.

² Capitolinus, *Gordiani*. ⁹ Vopiscus, *Aureliani*.

³ Xiphilinus, lxxviii. 15. ⁴ *Text Annal.* xv. 44.

⁵ Xiphilinus, lxxviii. 8; Statius, *Sylv.* i. 6.

⁶ During the Republic a rich man ordered in his will that some women he had purchased for the purpose should fight in the funeral games to his memory, but the people annulled the clause. (Athenæus, iv. 39.) Under Nero and Domitian female gladiators seem to have been not uncommon. See Statius, *Sylv.* i. 6; Sueton. *Domitian*, iv.; Xiphilinus, lxxviii. 8. Juvenal describes the enthusiasm with which Roman ladies practised with the gladiatorial weapons (*Sat.* vi. 248, etc.), and Martial (*De Spectac.* vi) mentions the combats of women with wild beasts. One, he says, killed a lion. A combat of female gladiators, under Severus, created some tumult, and it was decreed that they should no longer be permitted. (Xiphilinus, lxxv. 16.) See Magnin, pp. 434-435.

⁷ Martial, *De Spectac.* vii.

⁸ *Ibid.* Ep. viii. 30.

⁹ Tertullian, *Ad Nation.* i. 10. One of the most ghastly features of the games was the comic aspect they sometimes assumed. This was the case in the combats of dwarfs. There were also combats by blindfolded men. Petronius (*Satyricon*, c. xlv.) has given us a horrible description of the maimed and feeble men who were sometimes compelled to fight. People afflicted with epilepsy were accustomed to drink the blood of the wounded gladiators, which they believed to be a sovereign remedy. (Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* xxviii. 2; Tertullian, *Apol.* ix.)

² Sueton. *Claudius*, xxv.

³ "Et verso pollice vulgi
Quemlibet occidit populariter"

(Juvenal, *Sat.* vii. 36-37.)

⁴ Besides the many incidental notices scattered through the Roman historians, and through the writings of Seneca, Plutarch, Juvenal, and Pliny, we have a curious little book, *De Spectaculis*, by Martial—a book which is not more horrible from the atrocities it recounts than from the perfect absence of all feeling of repulsion or compassion it everywhere displays.

⁵ These are but a few of the many examples given by Magnin, who has collected a vast array of authori-

who was most beloved by the Roman multitude. Heliogabalus and Galerius are reported, when dining, to have regaled themselves with the sight of criminals torn by wild beasts. It was said of the latter that "he never supped without human blood."¹

It is well for us to look steadily on such facts as these. They display more vividly than any mere philosophical disquisition the abyss of depravity into which it is possible for human nature to sink. They furnish us with striking proofs of the reality of the moral progress we have attained, and they enable us in some degree to estimate the regenerating influence that Christianity has exercised in the world. For the destruction of the gladiatorial games is all its work. Philosophers, indeed, might deplore them, gentle natures might shrink from their contagion, but to the multitude they possessed a fascination which nothing but the new religion could overcome.

Nor was this fascination surprising, for no pageant has ever combined more powerful elements of attraction. The magnificent circus, the gorgeous dresses of the assembled Court, the contagion of a passionate enthusiasm thrilling almost visibly through the mighty throng, the breathless silence of expectation, the wild cheers bursting simultaneously from eighty thousand tongues, and echoing to the farthest outskirts of the city, the rapid alternations of the fray, the deeds of splendid courage that were manifested, were all well fitted to entrance the imagination. The crimes and servitude of the gladiator were for a time forgotten in the blaze of glory that surrounded him. Representing to the highest degree that courage which the Romans deemed the first of virtues, the cynosure of countless eyes, the chief object of conversation in the metropolis of the universe, destined, if victorious, to be immortalised in the mosaic and the sculpture,² he not unrequently rose to heroic grandeur. The gladiator Spartacus for three years defied the bravest armies of Rome. The greatest

of Roman generals had chosen gladiators for his body-guard.³ A band of gladiators, faithful even to death, followed the fortunes of the fallen Antony, when all besides had deserted him.⁴ Beautiful eyes, trembling with passion, looked down upon the fight, and the noblest ladies in Rome, even the empress herself, had been known to crave the victor's love.⁵ We read of gladiators lamenting that the games occurred so seldom,⁶ complaining bitterly if they were not permitted to descend into the arena,⁷ scorning to fight except with the most powerful antagonists,⁸ laughing aloud as their wounds were dressed,⁹ and at last, when prostrate in the dust, calmly turning their throats to the sword of the conqueror.¹⁰ The enthusiasm that gathered round them was so intense that special laws were found necessary, and were sometimes insufficient, to prevent patricians from enlisting in their ranks,¹¹ while the tranquil courage with which they never failed to die supplied the philosopher with his most striking examples.¹² The severe continence that was required before the combat, contrasting vividly with the licentiousness of Roman life, had even invested them with something of a moral dignity; and it is a singularly suggestive fact that of all pagan characters the gladiator was selected by the Fathers as the closest approximation to a Christian model.¹³

¹ Plutarch's *Life of Cæsar*.

² *De Cassius*, ii. 7.

³ Faustina, the wife of Marcus Aurelius, was especially accused of this weakness. (Cassius, *Marcellus Augustus*.)

⁴ Seneca, *De Providentia*, i.

⁵ Arnobius's *Epistola*, i. 29.

⁶ Seneca, *De Providentia*, i. 11.

⁷ Aulus Gellius, xii. 5.

⁸ Cicero, *Tusc.* lib. ii.

⁹ Some Equites fought under Julius Cæsar, and a senator named Fulvius Setinus wished to fight, but Cæsar prevented him. (Suet. *Cæsar*, xxv. 2; *De Cæsaribus*, lib. 23.) Nero, according to Suetonius, compelled men of the highest rank to fight. Laws prohibiting patricians from fighting were several times made and violated. (Friedländer, pp. 39-41.) Commodus is said to have been himself passionately fond of fighting as a gladiator. Much, however, of what Lampricus relates on this point is perfectly incredible. On the other hand, the profession of the gladiator was constantly spoken of as infamous; but in a competition between extreme admiration and contempt will surprise no one who has noticed the tone continually adopted about prize-fighters in England, and about the members of some other professions on the Continent. Juvenal dwells (*Sat.* vii. 197-210) with great indignation on an instance of a patrician fighting.

¹⁰ "Cui medicus gladiator ingemuit, qui vultum mutavit urguum?" (Cic. *Tusc. Quæst.* lib. ii.)

¹¹ E.g. Clem. Alex. *Strom.* iii. There is a well-known passage of this kind in Horace, *Ars. Poet.* 412-415. The comparison of the good man to an athlete or gladiator, which St. Paul employed, occurs also in Seneca and Epictetus, from which some have inferred

¹² "Nec unquam sine humero cæcore coenabat" (Lactant. *De Mort. Persec.*) Much the same thing is told of the Christian emperor Justinian II, who lived at the end of the seventh century. (Sismondi, *Hist. de la Chute de l'Empire Romain*, to me. ii. p. 85.)

¹³ Winckelmann says the statue called "The Dying Gladiator" does not represent a gladiator. At a later period, however, statues of gladiators were not uncommon, and Pliny notices (*Hist. Nat.* xlv. 33) paintings of them. A fine specimen of mosaic portraits of gladiators is now in the Lateran Museum.

St. Augustine tells us how one of his friends, being drawn to the spectacle, endeavoured, by closing his eyes, to guard against a fascination he knew to be sinful. A sudden cry caused him to break his resolution, and he never could withdraw his gaze again.¹

And while the influences of the amphitheatre gained a complete ascendancy over the populace, the Roman was not without excuses that could lull his moral feelings to repose. The games, as I have said, were originally human sacrifices—religious rites sacred to the dead—and it was argued that the death of the gladiator was both more honourable and more merciful than that of the passive victim, who, in the Homeric age, was sacrificed at the tomb. The combatants were either professional gladiators, slaves, criminals, or military captives. The lot of the first was voluntary. The second had for a long time been regarded as almost beneath or beyond a freeman's care; but when the enlarging circle of sympathy had made the Romans regard their slaves as "a kind of second human nature,"² they perceived the atrocity of exposing them in the games, and an edict of the emperor forbade it.³ The third had been condemned to death, and as the victorious gladiator was at least sometimes pardoned,⁴ a permission to fight was regarded as an act of mercy. The fate of the fourth could not strike the early Roman with the horror it would now inspire, for the right of the conquerors to massacre their prisoners was almost universally admitted.⁵ But, beyond the point of desiring the games to be in some degree restricted, extremely few of the moralists of the Roman Empire ever advanced. That it was a horrible and demoralising thing to make the spectacle

of the deaths, even of guilty men, a form of popular amusement, was a position which no Roman school had attained, and which was reached by only a very few individuals. Cicero observes, "that the gladiatorial spectacles appear to some cruel and inhuman," and, he adds, "I know not whether as they are now conducted it is not so, but when guilty men are compelled to fight, no better discipline against suffering and death can be presented to the eye."⁶ Seneca, it is true, adopts a far nobler language. He denounced the games with a passionate eloquence. He refuted indignantly the argument derived from the guilt of the combatants, and declared that under every form and modification these amusements were brutalising, savage, and detestable.⁷ Plutarch went even farther, and condemned the combats of the wild beasts, on the ground that we should have a bond of sympathy with all sentient beings, and that the sight of blood and of suffering is necessarily and essentially depraving.⁸ To these instances we may add Petronius, who condemned the shows in his poem on the civil war; Junius Mauricius, who refused to permit the inhabitants of Vienne to celebrate them, and replied to the remonstrances of the emperor, "Would to Heaven it were possible to abolish such spectacles, even at Rome!"⁹ and, above all, Marcus Aurelius, who, by compelling the gladiators to fight with blunted swords, rendered them for a time comparatively harmless.¹⁰ But these, with the Athenian remonstrances I have already noticed, are almost the only instances now remaining of pagan protests against the most conspicuous as well as the most atrocious feature of the age. Juvenal, whose unsparing satire has traversed the whole field of Roman manners, and who denounces fiercely all cruelty to slaves, has repeatedly noticed the gladiatorial shows, but on no single occasion does he intimate that they were inconsistent with humanity. Of all the great historians who recorded them, not one seems to have been conscious that he was record-

that they must have known the writings of the Apostle M. Denis, however, has shown (*Idees morales dans l'Antiquité*, tome ii. p. 240) that the same comparison had been used, before the rise of Christianity, by Plato, Æscynnes, and Cicero.

¹ *Confess.* vi. 8.

² "[Serv]i etsi per fortunam in omnia obnoxii, tamen quasi secundum hominum genus sint." (Florus, *Hist.* iii. 20.)

³ Macrinus, however, punished fugitive slaves by compelling them to fight as gladiators. (Capitolinus, *Macrinus*.)

⁴ Tacit. *Annal.* xii. 56. According to Friedländer, however, there were two classes of criminals. One class were condemned only to fight, and pardoned if they conquered, the others were condemned to fight till death, and this was considered an aggravation of capital punishment.

⁵ "Ad conciliandum plebis favorem effusa largitio, quum spectaculis indulget, supplicia quondam hostium artem facit." (Florus, iii. 12.)

⁶ *Tusc. Quest.* ii. 17.

⁷ See his magnificent letter on the subject (*Ep.* vii.)

⁸ In his two treatises *De Esu Carnum*.

⁹ Pliny, *Ep.* iv. 22.

¹⁰ Xiphilin, lxxi. 29. Capitolinus, *M. Aurelius*. The emperor also once carried off the gladiators to a war with his army, much to the indignation of the people. (Capit.) He has himself noticed the extreme weariness he felt at the public amusements he was obliged to attend. (vii. 3.)

ing a barbarity, not one appears to have seen in them any greater evils than an increasing tendency to pleasure and the excessive multiplication of a dangerous class. The Roman sought to make men brave and fearless, rather than gentle and humane, and in his eyes that spectacle was to be applauded which steeled the heart against the fear of death, even at the sacrifice of the affections. Titus and Trajan, in whose reigns, probably, the greatest number of shows were compressed into a short time, were both men of conspicuous clemency, and no Roman seems to have imagined that the fact of 3,000 men having been compelled to fight under the one, and 10,000 under the other, cast the faintest shadow upon their characters. Suetonius mentions, as an instance of the amiability of Titus, that he was accustomed to jest with the people during the combats of the gladiators,¹ and Pliny especially eulogised Trajan because he did not patronise spectacles that enervate the character, but rather those which impel men "to noble wounds and to the contempt of death."² The same writer, who was himself in many ways conspicuous for his gentleness and charity, having warmly commended a friend for acceding to a petition of the people of Verona, who desired a spectacle, adds this startling sentence: "After so general a request, to have refused would not have been firmness—it would have been cruelty."³ Even in the closing years of the fourth century, the præfect Symmachus, who was regarded as one of the most estimable pagans of his age, collected some Saxon prisoners to fight in honour of his son. They strangled themselves in prison, and Symmachus lamented the misfortune that had befallen him from their "impious naids," but endeavoured to calm his feelings by recalling the patience of Socrates and the precepts of philosophy.⁴

While, however, I have no desire to disguise or palliate the extreme atrocity of this aspect of Roman life, there are certain very natural exaggerations, against which it is necessary for us to guard. There are in human nature, and

more especially in the exercise of the benevolent affections, inequalities, inconsistencies, and anomalies, of which theorists do not always take account. We should be altogether in error if we supposed that a man who took pleasure in a gladiatorial combat in ancient Rome was necessarily as inhuman as a modern would be who took pleasure in a similar spectacle. A man who falls but a little below the standard of his own merciful age is often in reality far worse than a man who had conformed to the standard of a much more barbarous age, even though the latter will do some things with perfect equanimity from which the other would recoil with horror. We have a much greater power than is sometimes supposed of localising both our benevolent and malevolent feelings. If a man is very kind or very harsh to some particular class, this is usually, and on the whole justly, regarded as an index of his general disposition, but the inference is not infallible, and it may easily be pushed too far. There are some who appear to expend all their kindly feelings on a single class, and to treat with perfect indifference all outside it. There are others who regard a certain class as quite outside the pale of their sympathies, while in other spheres their affections prove lively and constant. There are many who would accede without the faintest reluctance to a barbarous custom, but would be quite incapable of an equally barbarous act when custom had not consecrated. Our affections are so capricious in their nature that it is continually necessary to correct by detailed experience the most plausible deductions. Thus, for example, it is a very unquestionable and a very important truth that cruelty to animals naturally indicates and promotes a habit of mind which leads to cruelty to men, and that, on the other hand, an affectionate and merciful disposition to animals commonly implies a gentle and amiable nature. But, if we adopted this principle as an infallible criterion of humanity, we should soon find ourselves at fault. To the somewhat too hackneyed anecdote of Domitian gratifying his savage propensities by killing flies,⁵ we might oppose

¹ Sueton *Titus*, vii.

² "Visum est spectaculum inde non enerve nec fluxum, nec quod animos virorum molliret et trangeret sed quod ad pulchra vulnere contemptumque mortis accenderet." (Pliny, *Paneg.* x. 11.)

³ "Præterea tanto consensu rogabatur, ut regere non constans durum decerneret." (Petr. *Epist.* vi. 34.)

⁴ Symmachus, *Epist.* iii. 46.

⁵ Sueton *Dom. Aug.* vi. It is very curious that the same emperor about the same time (the beginning of his reign), saw such a horror of bloodshed that he resolved to prohibit the sacrifice of oxen. (Suet. *Dom.* ix.)

Spinoza, one of the purest, most gentle, most benevolent of mankind, of whom it is related that almost the only amusement of his life was putting flies into spiders' webs, and watching their struggles and their deaths.¹ It has been observed that a very large proportion of the men who during the French Revolution proved themselves most absolutely indifferent to human suffering were deeply attached to animals. Fournier was devoted to a squirrel, Couthon to a spaniel, Panis to two gold pheasants, Chaumette to an aviary; Marat kept doves.² Bacon has noticed that the Turks, who are a cruel people, are nevertheless conspicuous for their kindness to animals, and he mentions the instance of a Christian boy who was nearly stoned to death for gagging a long-billed fowl.³ In Egypt there are hospitals for superannuated cats, and the most loathsome insects are regarded with tenderness; but human life is treated as if it were of no account, and human suffering scarcely elicits a care.⁴ The same contrast appears more or less in all Eastern nations. On the other hand, travellers are unanimous in declaring that in Spain an intense passion for the bull-fight is quite compatible with the most active benevolence and the most amiable disposition. Again, to pass to another sphere, it is not uncommon to find conquerors, who will sacrifice with perfect callousness great masses of men to their ambition, but who, in their dealings with isolated individuals, are distinguished by an invariable clemency. Anomalies of this kind continually appear in the Roman population. The very men who looked down with delight when the sand of the arena was reddened with human blood, made the theatre ring with applause when Terence, in his famous line, proclaimed the universal brotherhood of man. When the Senate, being unable to discover the murderer of a

patrician, resolved to put his four hundred slaves to death, the people rose in open rebellion against the sentence.⁵ A knight named Erixo, who in the days of Augustus had so scourged his son that he died of the effects, was nearly torn to pieces by the indignant population.⁶ The elder Cato deprived a senator of his rank because he had fixed an execution at such an hour that his mistress could enjoy the spectacle.⁷ Even in the amphitheatre there were certain traces of a milder spirit. Drusus, the people complained, took too visible a pleasure at the sight of blood;⁸ Caligula was too curious in watching death;⁹ Caracalla, when a boy, won enthusiastic plaudits by shedding tears at the execution of criminals.¹⁰ Among the most popular spectacles at Rome was rope-dancing, and then, as now, the cord being stretched at a great height above the ground, the apparent, and indeed real, danger added an evil zest to the performances. In the reign of Marcus Aurelius an accident had occurred, and the emperor, with his usual sensitive humanity, ordered that no rope-dancer should perform without a net or a mattress being spread out below. It is a singularly curious fact that this precaution, which no Christian nation has adopted, continued in force during more than a century of the worst period of the Roman Empire, when the blood of captives was poured out like water in the Colosseum.¹¹ The standard of humanity was very low, but the sentiment was still manifest, though its displays were capricious and inconsistent.

The sketch I have now drawn will, I think, be sufficient to display the broad chasm that existed between the Roman moralists and the Roman people. On the one hand we find a system of ethics, of which, when we consider the range and beauty of its precepts, the sublimity of the motives to which it appealed, and

¹ "Pendant qu'il restait au logis, il n'était incommodé à personne; il y passait la meilleure partie de son temps tranquillement dans sa chambre. Il se divertissait aussi quelquefois à fumer une pipe de tabac; ou bien lorsqu'il voulait se relâcher l'esprit un peu plus longtemps, il cherchait des araignées qu'il faisait battre ensemble, ou des mouches qu'il jetait dans la toile d'araignée, et regardait ensuite cette bataille avec tant de plaisir qu'il éclatait quelquefois de rire." (Colerus, *Vie de Spinoza*.)

² This is noticed by George Duval in a curious passage of his *Souvenirs de la Terreur*, quoted by Lord Lytton in a note to his *Zanoni*.

³ *Essay on Goodness*.

⁴ This contrast has been noticed by Archbishop Whately in a lecture on Egypt. See, too, Legendre, *Traité de l'Opinion*, tome ii. p. 374.

⁵ Tacit. *Annal.* xiv. 45.

⁶ Senec. *De Clem.* i. 14.

⁷ Val. Max. ii. 9. This writer speaks of "the eyes of a mistress delighting in human blood" with as much horror as if the gladiatorial games were unknown. Livy gives a rather different version of this story.

⁸ Tacit. *Annal.* i. 76.

⁹ Sueton. *Calig.* xi.

¹⁰ Spartian. *Caracalla*. Tertullian mentions that his nurse was a Christian.

¹¹ Capitolinus, *Marcus Aurelius*. Capitolinus, who wrote under Diocletian, says that in his time the custom of spreading a net under the rope-dancer still continued. I do not know when it ceased at Rome, but St. Chrysostom mentions that in his time it had been abolished in the East. (Jortin's *Remarks on Ecclesiastical History*, ii. 71, ed. 1846.)

its perfect freedom from superstitious elements, it is not too much to say that, though it may have been equalled, it has never been surpassed. On the other hand, we find a society almost absolutely destitute of moralising institutions, occupations, or beliefs, existing under an economical and political system which inevitably led to general depravity, and passionately addicted to the most brutalising amusements. The moral code, while it expanded in theoretical catholicity, had contracted in practical application. The early Romans had a very narrow and imperfect standard of duty, but their patriotism, their military system, and their enforced simplicity of life had made that standard essentially popular. The later Romans had attained a very high and spiritual conception of duty, but the philosopher with his group of disciples, or the writer with his few readers, had scarcely any point of contact with the people. The great practical problem of the ancient philosophers was how they could act upon the masses. Simply to tell men what is virtue, and to extol its beauty, is insufficient. Something more must be done if the characters of nations are to be moulded and inveterate vices eradicated.

This problem the Roman Stoics were incapable of meeting, but they did what lay in their power, and their efforts, though altogether inadequate to the disease, were by no means contemptible. In the first place they raised up many great and good rulers who exerted all the influence of their position in the cause of virtue. In most cases these reforms were abolished on the accession of the first bad emperor, but there were at least some that remained. It has been observed that the luxury of the table, which had acquired the most extravagant proportions during the period that elapsed between the battle of Actium and the reign of Galba, began from this period to decline, and the change is chiefly attributed to Vespasian, who had in a measure reformed the Roman aristocracy by the introduction of many provincials, and who made his court an example of the strictest frugality.¹ The period from the accession of Nerva to the death of Marcus Aurelius, comprising no less than eighty-four years, exhibits a uniformity of good government which no other despotic monarchy has

equalled. Each of the five emperors who then reigned deserves to be placed among the best rulers who have ever lived. Trajan and Hadrian, whose personal characters were most defective, were men of great and conspicuous genius. Antoninus and Marcus Aurelius, though less distinguished as politicians, were among the most perfectly virtuous men who have ever sat on a throne. During forty years of this period perfect, unbroken peace reigned over the entire civilised globe. The barbarian encroachments had not yet begun. The distinct nationalities that composed the Empire, gratified by perfect municipal and by perfect intellectual freedom, had lost all care for political liberty, and little more than three hundred thousand soldiers guarded a territory which is now protected by much more than three millions.²

In creating this condition of affairs Stoicism, as the chief moral agent of the Empire, had a considerable, though not a preponderating, influence. In other ways its influence was more evident and exclusive. It was a fundamental maxim of the sect "that the sage should take part in public life,"³ and it was therefore impossible that Stoicism should flourish without producing a resuscitation of patriotism. The same moral impulse which transformed the Neo-Platonist into a dreaming mystic and the Catholic into a useless hermit, impelled the Stoic to the foremost post of danger in the service of his country. While landmark after landmark of Roman virtue was submerged, while luxury and scepticism and foreign habits and foreign creeds were corroding the whole framework of the national life, amid the last paroxysms of expiring liberty, amid the hideous carnival of vice that soon followed upon its fall, the Stoic remained unchanged, the representative and the sustainer of the past. A party which had acquired the noble title of the Party of Virtue, guided by such men as Cato or Thræsea or Helvidius or Burrhus, upheld the banner of Roman virtue and Roman liberty in the darkest hours of despotism and of apostasy. Like all men who carry an intense religious fervour into politics, they were often narrow-minded and intolerant, blind to the inevitable changes of society, incapable of compromise, turbulent and inopportune

¹ Tacit. *Ann.* iii. 55

² Campany, *Les Antonins*, tome ii. pp. 179-200.

³ *πολιτεῖσθαι* - *ον* *σόφου*. (Diog. Laert. *Zeno*.)

in their demands,¹ but they more than redeemed their errors by their noble constancy and courage. The austere purity of their lives, and the heroic grandeur of their deaths, kept alive the tradition of Roman liberty even under a Nero or a Domitian. While such men existed it was felt that all was not lost. There was still a rallying-point of freedom, a seed of virtue that might germinate anew, a living protest against the despotism and the corruption of the Empire.

A third and still more important service which Stoicism rendered to popular morals was in the formation of Roman jurisprudence.² Of all the many forms of intellectual exertion in which Greece and Rome struggled for the mastery, this is perhaps the only one in which the superiority of the latter is indisputable. "To rule the nations" was justly pronounced by the Roman poet the supreme glory of his countrymen, and their administrative genius is even now unrivalled in history. A deep reverence for law was long one of their chief moral characteristics, and in order that it might be inculcated from the earliest years it was a part of the Roman system of education to oblige the children to repeat by rote the code of the *decemvirs*.³ The laws of the Republic, however, being an expression of the contracted, local, military, and sacerdotal spirit that dominated among the people, were necessarily unfit for the political and intellectual expansion of the Empire, and the process of renovation which was begun under Augustus by the Stoic *Labeo*⁴ was continued with

great zeal under Hadrian and Alexander Severus, and issued in the famous compilations of Theodosius and Justinian. In this movement we have to observe two parts. There are certain general rules of guidance laid down by the great Roman lawyers which constituted what may be called the ideal of the *jurisconsults*—the ends to which their special enactments tended—the principles of equity to guide the judge when the law was silent or ambiguous. There were also definite enactments to meet specific cases. The first part was simply borrowed from the Stoics, whose doctrines and method thus passed from the narrow circle of a philosophical academy and became the avowed moral beacons of the civilised globe. The fundamental difference between Stoicism and early Roman thought was that the former maintained the existence of a bond of unity among mankind which transcended or annihilated all class or national limitations. The essential characteristic of the Stoical method was the assertion of the existence of a certain law of nature to which it was the end of philosophy to conform. These tenets were laid down in the most unqualified language by the Roman lawyers. "As far as natural law is concerned," said Ulpian, "all men are equal."¹ "Nature," said Paul, "has established among us a certain relationship."² "By natural law," Ulpian declared, "all men are born free."³ "Slavery" was defined by Florentinus as "a custom of the law of nations, by which one man, contrary to the law of nature, is subjected to the dominion of another."⁴ In accordance with these principles it became a maxim among the Roman lawyers that in every doubtful case where the alternative of slavery or freedom was at issue, the decision of the judge should be towards the latter.⁵

The Roman legislation was in a two-fold manner the child of philosophy. It was in the first place itself formed upon the philosophical model, for, instead of being a mere empirical system adjusted to the existing requirements of society, it laid down abstract principles of right to

that of Capito. The first was remarkable for its strict adherence to the letter of the law—the second for the latitude of interpretation it admitted.

¹ *Dig. lib. i. tit. 17-32.*

² *Ibid. i. tit. 1-3.*

³ *Ibid. i. tit. 1-4.*

⁴ *Ibid. lib. i. tit. 4-5.*

⁵ Laferrrière, p. 32. Wallon, *Hist. de l'Esclavage dans l'Antiquité*, tome iii. pp. 71-80. M. Wallon gives many curious instances of legal decisions on this point.

¹ Thus Tigellinus spoke of "*Stoicorum arrogantia sectaque quæ turbidos et negotiorum appetentes faciat*" (Tacit. *Ann.* xiv. 57). The accusation does not appear to have been quite untrue, for Vespasian, who was a very moderate emperor, thought it necessary to banish nearly all the philosophers from Rome on account of their factiousness. Sometimes the Stoics showed their independence by a rather gratuitous insolence. Dion Cassius relates that, when Nero was thinking of writing a poem in 400 books, he asked the advice of the Stoic Cornutus, who said that no one would read so long a work. "But," answered Nero, "your favourite Chrysippus wrote still more numerous books." "True," rejoined Cornutus, "but then they were of use to humanity." On the other hand, Seneca is justly accused of condescending too much to the vices of Nero in his efforts to mitigate their effects.

² The influence of Stoicism on Roman law has been often examined. See, especially, Degerando, *Hist. de la Philosophie* (and ed.), tome iii. pp. 202-204; Lalor, *De l'Influence du Stoicisme sur les Jurisconsultes romains*; Denis, *Théories et Idées morales dans l'Antiquité*, tome ii. pp. 187-217; Troplong, *Influence du Christianisme sur le Droit civil des Romains*; Merivale, *Conversion of the Roman Empire*, lec. iv.; and the great work of Gravina, *De Ortu et Progressu juris civilis*.
³ Cic. *De Legib.* ii. 4, 23.

⁴ There were two rival schools, that of Labeo and

which it endeavoured to conform;¹ and, in the next place, these principles were borrowed directly from Stoicism. The prominence the sect had acquired among Roman moralists, its active intervention in public affairs, and also the precision and brevity of its phraseology, had recommended it to the lawyers,² and the union then effected between the legal and philosophical spirit is felt to the present day. To the Stoics and the Roman lawyers is mainly due the clear recognition of the existence of a law of nature above and beyond all human enactments which has been the basis of the best moral and of the most influential though most chimerical political speculation of later ages, and the renewed study of Roman law was an important element in the revival that preceded the Reformation.

It is not necessary for my present purpose to follow into very minute detail the application of these principles to practical legislation. It is sufficient to say that there were few departments into which the catholic and humane principles of Stoicism were not in some degree carried. In the political world, as we have already seen, the right of Roman citizenship, with the protection and the legal privileges attached to it, from being the monopoly of a small class, was gradually but very widely diffused. In the domestic sphere the power which the old laws had given to the father of the family, though not destroyed, was greatly

abridged, and an important innovation, which is well worthy of a brief notice, was thus introduced into the social system of the Empire.

It is probable that in the chronology of morals domestic virtue takes the precedence of all others; but in its earliest phase it consists of a single article—the duty of absolute submission to the head of the household. It is only at a later period, and when the affections have been in some degree evoked, that the reciprocity of duty is felt, and the whole tendency of civilisation is to diminish the disparity between the different members of the family. The process by which the wife, from a simple slave, becomes the companion and equal of her husband I shall endeavour to trace in a future chapter. The relations of the father to his children are profoundly modified by the new position the affections assume in education, which in a rude nation rests chiefly upon authority, but in a civilised community upon sympathy. In Rome the absolute authority of the head of the family was the centre and archetype of that whole system of discipline and subordination which it was the object of the legislator to sustain. Filial reverence was enforced as the first of duties. It is the one virtue which Virgil attributed in any remarkable degree to the founder of the race. The marks of external respect paid to old men were scarcely less than in Sparta.³ It was the boast of the lawyers that in no other nation had the parent so great an authority over his children.⁴ The child was indeed the absolute slave of his father, who had a right at any time to take away his life and dispose of his entire property. He could look to no time during the life of his father in which he would be freed from the thralldom. The man of fifty, the consul, the general, or the tribune, was in this respect in the same position as the infant, and might at any moment be deprived of all the earnings of his labour, driven to the most menial employments, or even put to death, by the paternal command.⁵

See a very remarkable passage in Aulus Gellius, *Noct. ii. 15*.

² "Fere enim nulli alii sunt homines qui tam in flosculos nascent potestatem quam nos habemus" (Gaius).

³ A full statement of these laws is given by Dion Halicarn. ii. 4. It was provided that if a father sold his son, and if the son was afterwards enfranchised by the purchaser, he became again the slave of his father, who might sell him a second, and, if necessary again ensue, a third time. It was only on the third

¹ To prove that this is the correct conception of law was the main object of Cicero's treatise *De Legibus*. Ulpian defined jurisprudence as "divinarum atque humanarum rerum notitia, iusti atque injusti scientia" (*Dig. lib. i. tit. 1-10*). So Paul, "Id quod semper æquum ac bonum est jus dicitur ut est jus naturale" (*Dig. lib. i. tit. 1-11*). And Gaius, "Quod vero naturalis ratio inter omnes homines constituit vocatur jus gentium" (*Dig. lib. i. tit. 1-9*). The Stoics have defined true wisdom as "rerum divinarum atque humanarum scientia" (*Cic. De Officiis*, i. 43).

² Cicero compares the phraseology of the Stoics with that of the Peripatetics, maintaining that the precision of the former is well adapted to legal discussions, and the redundancy of the latter to oratory. "Omnes fere Stoici prudensissimi in dixerendo sint et id arte faciunt, sintque architecti pene verborum, inde tractant a disputando ad dixerendum, inopes repertiunt unum excipio Catonem Peripateticum in institutis commodius fingeretur oratio nam ut Stoicorum astrictior est oratio, aliqua quoque contractior quam aures populi requirunt sic illorum loquor et loquor quam patitur consuetudo iudiciorum et tori" (*De Claris Oratoribus*). A very judicious historian of philosophy observes, "En général à Rome le petit nombre d'hommes livrés à la méditation et à l'enthousiasme préférèrent Pythagore et Platon, les hommes du monde et ceux qui cultivaient les sciences naturelles s'attachèrent à Épicure, les orateurs et les hommes d'État à la nouvelle Académie; les jurisconsultes au Portique." (Degerando, *Hist. de la Philos.* tome ii. p. 196).

There can, I think, be little question that this law, at least in the latter period of its existence, defeated its own object. There are few errors of education to which more unhappy homes may be traced than this—that parents have sought to command the obedience, before they have sought to win the confidence, of their children. This was the path which the Roman legislator indicated to the parent, and its natural consequence was to chill the sympathies and arouse the resentment of the young. Of all the forms of virtue, filial affection is perhaps that which appears most rarely in Roman history. In the plays of Plautus it is treated much as conjugal fidelity was treated in England by the playwrights of the Restoration. An historian of the reign of Tiberius has remarked that the civil wars were equally remarkable for the many examples they supplied of the devotion of wives to their husbands, of the devotion of slaves to their masters, and of the treachery or indifference of sons to their fathers.¹

The reforms that were effected during the pagan Empire did not reconstruct the family, but they at least greatly mitigated its despotism. The profound change of feeling that had taken place on the subject is shown by the contrast between the respectful, though somewhat shrinking, acquiescence with which the ancient Romans regarded parents who had put their children to death,² and the indignation excited under Augustus by the act of Erixo. Hadrian, apparently by a stretch of despotic power, banished a man who had assassinated his son.³ Infanticide was forbidden, though not

seriously repressed; but the right of putting to death an adult child had long been obsolete, when Alexander Severus formally withdrew it from the father. The property of children was also in some slight degree protected. A few instances are recorded of wills that were annulled because they had disinherited legitimate sons,⁴ and Hadrian, following a policy that had been feebly initiated by his two predecessors, gave the son an absolute possession of whatever he might gain in the military service. Diocletian rendered the sale of children by the fathers, in all cases, illegal.⁵

In the field of slavery the legislative reforms were more important. This institution, indeed, is one that meets us at every turn of the moral history of Rome, and on two separate occasions in the present chapter I have already had occasion to notice it. I have shown that the great prominence of the slave element in Roman life was one of the causes of the enlargement of sympathies that characterises the philosophy of the Empire, and also that slavery was in a very high degree, and in several distinct ways, a cause of the corruption of the free classes. In considering the condition of the slaves themselves, we may distinguish, I think, three periods. In the earlier and simpler days of the Republic, the head of the family was the absolute master of his slaves, but circumstances in a great measure mitigated the evil of the despotism. The slaves were very few in number. Each Roman proprietor had commonly one or two who assisted him in cultivating the soil, and superintended his property when he was absent in the army. In the frugal habits of the time the master was brought into the most intimate connection with his slaves. He shared their labours and their food, and the control he exercised over them in most cases probably differed little from that which he exercised over his sons. Under such circumstances great barbarity to slaves, though always possible, was not likely to be common, and the protection of religion was added to the force of habit. Hercules, the god of labour, was the special patron of slaves. There was

sale that he passed for ever out of the parental control. A more merciful law, attributed to Numa, provided that when the son married (if that marriage was with the consent of the father), the father lost the power of selling him. In no other way, however, was his authority even then abridged.

¹ Velleius Paterculus, ii. 67. A great increase of parricide was noticed during the Empire (Senec. *De Clem.* i. 23). At first, it is said, there was no law against parricide, for the crime was believed to be too atrocious to be possible.

² Numerous instances of these executions are collected by Livy, Val Maximus, etc.; their history is fully given by Cornelius van Bynkershoek—"De Jure occidendi, vendendi, et exponendi liberos apud veteres Romanos"—in his work, (Cologne, 1761).

³ This proceeding of Hadrian, which is related by the lawyer Marcian, is doubly remarkable, because the father had surprised his son in adultery with his step-mother. Now a Roman had originally not only absolute authority over the life of his son, but also the right of killing anyone whom he found committing adultery with his wife. Yet Marcian praises the severity of Hadrian—"Nam patria potestas in pietate debet, non atrocitate, consistere" (*Digest.* lib. xlviii. tit. 9, § 5).

⁴ Valer. Max. vii. 7.

⁵ See, on all this subject, Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, ch. xiv.; Troplong, *Influence du Christianisme sur le Droit*, ch. ix.; Denis, *Hist. des Idées morales*, tome ii. pp. 107-120; Laternière, *Influence du Stoïcisme sur les Jurisconsultes*, pp. 37-44.

a legend that Sparta had once been nearly destroyed by an earthquake sent by Neptune to avenge the treacherous murder of some Helots.¹ In Rome, it was said, Jupiter had once in a dream commissioned a man to express to the Senate the divine anger at the cruel treatment of a slave during the public games.² By the pontifical law slaves were exempted from field labours on the religious festivals.³ The Saturnalia and Matronalia, which were especially intended for their benefit, were the most popular holidays in Rome, and on these occasions the slaves were accustomed to sit at the same table with their masters.⁴

Even at this time, however, it is probable that great atrocities were occasionally committed. Everything was permitted by law, although it is probable that the censor in cases of extreme abuse might interfere, and the aristocratic feelings of the early Roman, though corrected in a measure by the associations of daily labour, sometimes broke out in a fierce scorn for all classes but his own. The elder Cato, who may be regarded as a type of the Romans of the earlier period, speaks of slaves simply as instruments for obtaining wealth, and he encouraged masters, both by his precept and his example, to sell them as useless when aged and infirm.⁵

In the second period the condition of slaves had greatly deteriorated. The victories of Rome, especially in the East, had introduced into the city innumerable slaves⁶ and the wildest luxury, and the despotism of the master remained unqualified by law, while the habits of life that had originally mitigated it had disappeared. The religious sentiments of the people were at the same time fatally impaired, and many new causes conspired to aggravate the evil. The passion for gladiatorial shows had begun, and it

continually produced a savage indifference to the infliction of pain. The servile wars of Sicily, and the still more formidable revolt of Spartacus, had shaken Italy to the centre, and the shock was felt in every household. "As many enemies as slaves" had become a Roman proverb. The fierce struggles of barbarian captives were repaid by fearful punishments, and many thousands of revolted slaves perished on the cross. An atrocious law, intended to secure the safety of the citizens, provided that if a master were murdered, all the slaves in his house, who were not in chains or absolutely helpless through illness, should be put to death.⁷

Numerous acts of the most odious barbarity were committed. The well-known anecdotes of Flaminius ordering a slave to be killed to gratify, by the spectacle, the curiosity of a guest; of Vedius Pollio feeding his fish on the flesh of slaves; and of Augustus sentencing a slave, who had killed and eaten a favourite quail, to crucifixion, are the extreme examples that are recorded; for we need not regard as an historical fact the famous picture in Juvenal of a Roman lady, in a moment of caprice, ordering her unoffending servant to be crucified. We have, however, many other very horrible glimpses of slave life at the close of the Republic and in the early days of the Empire. The marriage of slaves was entirely unrecognised by law, and in their case the words adultery, incest, and polygamy had no legal meaning. Their testimony was in general only received in the law-courts when they were under torture. When executed for a crime their deaths were of a most hideous kind. The ergastula, or private prisons, of the masters were frequently their only sleeping-places. Old and infirm slaves were constantly exposed to perish on an island of the Tiber. We read of slaves chained as porters to the doors, and cultivating the fields in chains. Ovid and Juvenal describe the fierce Roman ladies tearing their servants' faces, and thrusting the

¹ *Ælian, Hist. Var.* vi. 7.

² *Livy*, ii. 36; *Cicero, De Divin.* ii. 26.

³ *Cicero, De Legibus*, ii. 8-12. Cato, however, maintained that slaves might on those days be employed on work which did not require oxen. (*Wallon, Hist. de l'Esclavage*, tome ii. p. 215.)

⁴ See the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius.

⁵ See his *Life* by Plutarch, and his book on agriculture.

⁶ The number of the Roman slaves has been a matter of much controversy. M. Dureau de la Maille (*Econ. politique des Romains*) has restricted it more than any other writer. Gibbon (*Decline and Fall*, chap. ii.) has collected many statistics on the subject, but the fullest examination is in M. Wallon's admirable *Hist. de l'Esclavage*. On the contrast between the character of the slaves of the Republic and those of the Empire, see *Tac. Ann.* xiv. 44.

⁷ *Tacit. Annal.* xiii. 32; xiv. 42-45. *Wallon, Hist. de l'Esclavage*, ii. 293. I have already noticed the indignant rising of the people caused by the proposal to execute the 400 slaves of the murdered Pedanius. Their interposition was, however (as Tacitus informs us), unavailing, and the slaves, guarded against rescue by a strong band of soldiers, were executed. It was proposed to banish the freedmen who were in the house, but Nero interposed and prevented it. Pliny notices (*Ep. viii. 14*) the banishment of the freedmen of a murdered man.

long pins of their brooches into their flesh. The master, at the close of the Republic, had full power to sell his slave as a gladiator, or as a combatant with wild beasts.¹

All this is very horrible, but it must not be forgotten that there was another side to the picture. It is the custom of many ecclesiastical writers to paint the pagan society of the Empire as a kind of pandemonium, and with this object they collect the facts I have cited, which are for the most part narrated by Roman satirists or historians, as examples of the most extreme and revolting cruelty; they represent them as fair specimens of the ordinary treatment of the servile class, and they simply exclude from their consideration the many qualifying facts that might be alleged. Although the marriage of a slave was not legally recognised, it was sanctioned by custom, and it does not appear to have been common to separate his family.² Two customs to which I have already referred distinguish ancient slavery broadly from that of modern times. The peculium, or private property of slaves, was freely recognised by masters, to whom, however, after the death of the slave, part or all of it usually reverted,³ though some masters permitted their slaves to dispose of it by will.⁴ The enfranchisement of slaves was also carried on to such an extent as seriously to affect the population of the city. It appears from a passage in Cicero that an industrious and well-conducted captive might commonly look forward to his freedom in six years.⁵ Isolated acts of great cruelty undoubtedly occurred; but public opinion strongly reprehended them, and Seneca assures us that masters who ill-treated their slaves were pointed at and insulted in the streets.⁶ The slave was not necessarily the degraded being he has since appeared. The physician who attended the Roman in his sickness, the tutor to whom he

confided the education of his son, the artists whose works commanded the admiration of the city, were usually slaves. Slaves sometimes mixed with their masters in the family, ate habitually with them at the same table,⁷ and were regarded by them with the warmest affection. Tiro, the slave and afterwards the freedman of Cicero, compiled his master's letters, and has preserved some in which Cicero addressed him in terms of the most sincere and delicate friendship. I have already referred to the letter in which the younger Pliny poured out his deep sorrow for the death of some of his slaves, and endeavoured to console himself with the thought that as he had emancipated them before their death, at least they had died free.⁸ Epictetus passed at once from slavery to the friendship of an emperor.⁹ The great multiplication of slaves, though it removed them from the sympathy of their masters, must at least have in most cases alleviated their burdens. The application of torture to slave witnesses, horrible as it was, was a matter of rare occurrence, and was carefully restricted by law.¹⁰ Much vice was undoubtedly fostered, but yet the annals of the civil wars and of the Empire are crowded with the most splendid instances of the fidelity of slaves. In many cases they refused the boon of liberty and defied the most horrible tortures rather than betray their masters, accompanied them in their flight when all others had abandoned them, displayed undaunted courage and untiring ingenuity in rescuing them from danger, and in some cases saved the lives of their owners by the deliberate sacrifice of their own.¹¹ This was, indeed, for some time the pre-eminent virtue of Rome, and it proves conclusively that the masters were not so tyrannical, and that the slaves were not so degraded, as is sometimes alleged.

¹ Senec. *Ep.* xlvii.

² Pliny, *Ep.* viii. 16.

³ Spartianus, *Hadrianus*.

⁴ Compare Wallon, tome ii. p. 186; tome iii. pp. 65-66. Slaves were only to be called as witnesses in cases of incest, adultery, murder, and high treason, and where it was impossible to establish the crime without their evidence. Hadrian considered that the reality of the crime must have already acquired a strong probability, and the jurisconsult Paul laid down that at least two free witnesses should be heard, before slaves were submitted to torture, and that the offer of an accused person to have his slaves tortured that they might attest his innocence should not be accepted.

⁵ Numerous and very noble instances of slave fidelity are given by Seneca, *De Benefic.* iii. 19-21. Val. Max. vi. 8, and in Appian's *History of the Civil Wars*. See, too, Tacit. *Hist.* i. 3.

¹ See all this fully illustrated in Wallon. The plays of Plautus and the Roman writers on agriculture contain numerous allusions to the condition of slaves.

² Wallon, tome ii. pp. 209-210, 257. There were no laws till the time of the Christian emperors against separating the families of slaves, but it was a maxim of the jurisconsults that in forced sales they should not be separated. (Wallon, tome iii. pp. 55-56.)

³ *Ibid.* tome ii. pp. 211-212.

⁴ Plin. *Epist.* viii. 16. It was customary to allow the public or State slaves to dispose of half their goods by will. (Wallon, tome iii. p. 59.)

⁵ Wallon, tome ii. p. 419. This appears from an allusion of Cicero, *Philipp.* viii. 11.

⁶ Senec. *De Clem.* i. 18.

The duty of humanity to slaves had been at all time, one of those which the philosophers had most ardently inculcated. Plato and Aristotle, Zeno and Epicurus, were, on this point, substantially agreed.¹ The Roman Stoics gave the duty a similar prominence in their teaching, and Seneca especially has filled pages with exhortations to masters to remember that the accident of position in no degree affects the real dignity of men, that the slave may be free by virtue while the master may be a slave by vice, and that it is the duty of a good man to abstain not only from all cruelty, but even from all feeling of contempt towards his slaves.² But these exhortations, in which some have imagined that they have discovered the influence of Christianity, were, in fact, simply an echo of the teaching of ancient Greece, and especially of Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, who had laid down, long before the dawn of Christianity, the broad principles that "all men are by nature equal, and that virtue alone establishes a difference between them."³ The softening influence of the peace of the Antonines assisted this movement of humanity, and the slaves derived a certain incidental benefit from one of the worst features of the despotism of the Cæsars. The emperors, who continually apprehended plots against their lives or power, encouraged numerous spies around the more important of their subjects, and the facility with which slaves could discover the proceedings of their masters inclined the Government in their favour.

Under all these influences many laws were promulgated which profoundly altered the legal position of the slaves, and opened what may be termed the third period of Roman slavery. The Petronian law, which was issued by Augustus, or, more probably, by Nero, forbade the master to condemn his slave to combat with wild beasts without a sentence from a judge.⁴ Under Claudius, some citizens

exposed their sick slaves on the island of Æsculapius in the Tiber, to avoid the trouble of tending them, and the emperor decreed that if the slave so exposed recovered from his sickness he should become free, and also, that masters who killed their slaves instead of exposing them should be punished as murderers.⁵ It is possible that succour was afforded to the abandoned slave in the temple of Æsculapius,⁶ and it would appear from these laws that the wanton slaughter of a slave was already illegal. About this time the statue of the emperor had become an asylum for slaves.⁷ Under Nero a judge was appointed to hear their complaints, and was instructed to punish masters who treated them with barbarity, made them the instruments of lust, or withheld from them a sufficient quantity of the necessaries of life.⁸ A considerable pause appears to have ensued; but Domitian made a law, which was afterwards reiterated, forbidding the Oriental custom of mutilating slaves for sensual purposes, and the reforms were renewed with great energy in the period of the Antonines. Hadrian and his two successors formally deprived masters of the right of killing their slaves; forbade them to sell slaves to the lanistæ, or speculators in gladiators; destroyed the ergastula, or private prisons; ordered that, when a master was murdered, those slaves only should be tortured who were within hearing;⁹ appointed officers through all the provinces to hear the complaints of slaves; enjoined that no master should treat his slaves with excessive severity; and commanded that, when such severity was proved, the master should be compelled to sell the slave he had ill-treated.¹⁰ When we add to these laws the broad maxims of equity asserting the essential equality of the human race, which the jurists had

has been followed by Troplong and Mr. Merivale. Champagny (*Les Antonins*, tome ii. p. 125) thinks that no law after Tiberius was called *lex*.

² Sueton. *Claud.* xxv.; Dion Cass. ix. 29.

³ See Dumas, *Secours publics chez les Anciens* (Paris, 1813), pp. 125-130.

⁴ Senec. *De Clem.* i. 18.

⁵ Senec. *De Benef.* iii. 22.

⁶ Spartian. *Hædrianus*. Hadrian exiled a Roman lady for five years for treating her slaves with atrocious cruelty. (*Digest*, lib. i. tit. 6, § 2.)

⁷ See these laws fully examined by Wallon. tome iii. pp. 51-92, and also Laferrière, *Sur l'Influence du Stoïcisme sur le Droit*. The juriconsults gave a very wide scope to their definitions of cruelty. A master who degraded a literary slave, or a slave musician, to some coarse manual employment, such as a porter, was decided to have ill-treated him. (Wallon, tome iii. p. 62.)

¹ Aristotle had, it is true, declared slavery to be part of the law of nature—an opinion which, he said, was rejected by some of his contemporaries; but he advocated humanity to slaves quite as emphatically as the other philosophers (*Economics*, i. 5). Epicurus was conspicuous even among Greek philosophers for his kindness to slaves, and he associated some of his own with his philosophical labours. (Diog. Laërt. *Epicurus*.)

² *De Benef.* iii. 18-28; *De Vita Beata*, xxiv.; *De Clem.* i. 18, and especially *Ep.* xlvii. Epictetus, as might be expected from his history, frequently recurs to the duty. Plutarch writes very beautifully upon it in his treatise *De Cohibenda Ira*.

³ Diog. Laërt. *Zeno*.

⁴ Bodin thinks it was promulgated by Nero, and he

borrowed from the Stoics, and which supplied the principles to guide the judges in their decisions, it must be admitted that the slave code of Imperial Rome compares not unfavourably with those of some Christian nations.

While a considerable portion of the principles, and even much of the phraseology, of Stoicism passed into the system of public law, the Roman philosophers had other more direct means of acting on the people. On occasions of family bereavement, when the mind is most susceptible of impressions, they were habitually called in to console the survivors. Dying men asked their comfort and support in the last hours of their life. They became the directors of conscience to numbers who resorted to them for a solution of perplexing cases of practical morals, or under the influence of despondency or remorse.¹ They had their special exhortations for every vice, and their remedies adapted to every variety of character. Many cases were cited of the conversion of the vicious or the careless, who had been sought out and fascinated by the philosopher,² and who, under his guidance, had passed through a long course of moral discipline, and had at last attained a high degree of virtue. Education fell in a great degree into their hands. Many great families kept a philosopher among them in what in modern language might be termed the capacity of a domestic chaplain,³ while a system of popular preaching was created and widely diffused.

Of these preachers there were two classes, who differed greatly in their characters and their methods. The first, who have been very happily termed the "monks of Stoicism,"⁴ were the Cynics, who appear to have assumed among the later moralists of the pagan Empire a position somewhat resembling that of the mendicant orders in Catholicism. In a singularly curious dissertation of Epictetus,⁵ we have a picture of the ideal at

which a Cynic should aim, and it is impossible in reading it not to be struck by the resemblance it bears to the missionary friar. The Cynic should be a man devoting his entire life to the instruction of mankind. He must be unmarried, for he must have no family affections to divert or to dilute his energies. He must wear the meanest dress, sleep upon the bare ground, feed upon the simplest food, abstain from all earthly pleasures, and yet exhibit to the world the example of uniform cheerfulness and content. No one, under pain of provoking the Divine anger, should embrace such a career, unless he believes himself to be called and assisted by Jupiter. It is his mission to go among men as the ambassador of God, rebuking, in season and out of season, their irascibility, their cowardice, and their vice. He must stop the rich man in the market-place. He must preach to the populace in the highway. He must know no respect and no fear. He must look upon all men as his sons, and upon all women as his daughters. In the midst of a jeering crowd, he must exhibit such a placid calm that men may imagine him to be of stone. Ill-treatment, and exile, and death must have no terror in his eyes, for the discipline of his life should emancipate him from every earthly tie; and, when he is beaten, "he should love those who beat him, for he is at once the father and the brother of all men."

A curious contrast to the Cynic was the philosophic rhetorician, who gathered around his chair all that was most brilliant in Roman or Athenian society. The passion for oratory which the free institutions of Greece had formed, had survived the causes that produced it, and given rise to a very singular but a very influential profession; which, though excluded from the Roman Republic, acquired a great development after the destruction of political liberty. The rhetoricians were a kind of itinerant lecturers, who went about from city to city, delivering harangues that were often received with the keenest interest. For the most part, neither their characters nor their talents appear to have deserved much respect. Numerous anecdotes are recorded of their vanity and rapacity, and their success was a striking proof of the

¹ Thus, e.g., Livia called in the Stoic Areus to console her after the death of Drusus (Senec. *Ad Marc.*). Many of the letters of Seneca and Plutarch are written to console the suffering. Cato, Thrasea, and many others, appear to have fortified their last hours by conversation with philosophers. The whole of this aspect of Stoicism has been admirably treated by M. Martha (*Les Moralistes de l'Empire Romain*).

² We have a pleasing picture of the affection philosophers and their disciples sometimes bore to one another in the lines of Persius (*Sat. v.*) to his master Cornutus. ³ Grant's *Aristotle*, vol. i. pp. 277-278.

⁴ Champagny, *Les Antonins*, tome i. p. 405.

⁵ Arrian, iii. 22. Julian has also painted the char-

acter of the true Cynic, and contrasted it with that of the impostors who assumed the garb. See Neander's *Life of Julian* (London, 1850), p. 94.

decadence of public taste.¹ They had cultivated the histrionic part of oratory with the most minute attention. The arrangement of their hair, the folds of their dresses, all their postures and gestures, were studied with artistic care. They had determined the different kinds of action that are appropriate for each branch of a discourse and for each form of eloquence. Sometimes they personated characters in Homer or in ancient Greek history, and delivered speeches which those characters might have delivered in certain conjunctures of their lives. Sometimes they awakened the admiration of their audience by making a fly, a cockroach, dust, smoke, a mouse, or a parrot the subject of their eloquent eulogy.² Others, again, exercised their ingenuity in defending some glaring paradox or sophism, or in debating some intricate case of law or morals, or they delivered literary lectures remarkable for a minute but captious and fastidious criticism. Some of the rhetoricians recited only harangues prepared with the most elaborate care, others were ready debaters, and they travelled from city to city, challenging opponents to discuss some subtle and usually frivolous question. The poet Juvenal and the satirist Lucian had both for a time followed this profession. Many of the most eminent acquired immense wealth, travelled with a splendid retinue, and excited transports of enthusiasm in the cities they visited. They were often charged by cities to appear before the emperor to plead for a remission of taxes, or of the punishment due for some offence. They became in a great measure the educators of the people, and contributed very largely to form and direct their taste.

¹ Seneca the rhetorician (father of the philosopher) collected many of the sayings of the rhetoricians of his time. At a later period, Philostratus wrote the lives of eminent rhetoricians, Quintilian discussed their rules of oratory, and Aulus Gellius painted the whole society in which they moved. On their injurious influence upon eloquence, see Petronius, *Satyricon*, i. 2. Much curious information about the rhetoricians is collected in Martha, *Moralistes de l'Empire Romain*, and in Nisard, *Études sur les Poètes Latins de la Décadence*, art. Juvenal.

² "Cependant ces orateurs n'étaient jamais plus admirés que lorsqu'ils avaient le bonheur de trouver un sujet où la louange fut un tour de force.... Lucien a fait l'éloge de la mouche; Fronton de la poussière, de la fumée, de la négligence; Dion Chrysostome de la chevelure, du perroquet, etc. Au cinquième siècle, Synésius, qui fut un grand évêque, fera le panégyrique de la calvitie, long ouvrage où toutes les sciences sont mises à contribution pour apprendre aux hommes ce qu'il y a de non-seulement de bon mais aussi de mérites à être chauve." (Martha, *Moralistes de l'Empire Romain*, ed. 1865, p. 275.)

It had been from the first the custom of some philosophers to adopt this profession, and to expound in the form of rhetorical lectures the principles of their school. In the Flavian period and in the age of the Antonines this alliance of philosophy, and especially of Stoical philosophy, with rhetoric became more marked, and the foundation of liberally endowed chairs of rhetoric and philosophy by Vespasian, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius contributed to sustain it. Discourses of the Platonist Maximus of Tyre, and of the Stoic Dion Chrysostom, have come down to us, and they are both of a high order of intrinsic merit. The first turn chiefly on such subjects as the comparative excellence of active and contemplative life, the pure and noble conceptions of the Divine nature which underlie the fables or allegories of Homer, the dæmon of Socrates, the Platonic notions of the Divinity, the duty of prayer, the end of philosophy, and the ethics of love.² Dion Chrysostom, in his orations, expounded the noblest and purest theism, examined the place which images should occupy in worship, advocated humanity to slaves, and was, perhaps, the earliest writer in the Roman Empire who denounced hereditary slavery as illegitimate.³ His life was very eventful and very noble. He had become famous as a sophist and rhetorician, skilled in the laborious frivolities of the profession. Calamity, however, and the writings of Plato induced him to abandon them and devote himself exclusively to the improvement of mankind. Having defended with a generous rashness a man who had been proscribed by the tyranny of Domitian, he was compelled to fly from Rome in the garb of a beggar; and, carrying with him only a work of Plato and a speech of Demosthenes, he travelled to the most distant frontiers of the Empire. He gained his livelihood by the work of his hands, for he refused to receive money for his discourses; but he taught and captivated the Greek colonists who were scattered among the barbarians, and even the barbarians themselves. Upon the assassination of Domitian, when the legions hesitated to give their allegiance to Nerva, the eloquence of Dion Chrysostom overcame their irresolution. By the same eloquence

¹ There is a good review of the teaching of Maximus in Champagny, *Les Antonins*, tome ii. pp. 207-215.

² *Orat.* xv.; *De Servitute*.

he more than once appeased seditions in Alexandria and the Greek cities of Asia Minor. He preached before Trajan on the duties of royalty, taking a line of Homer for his text. He electrified the vast and polished audience assembled at Athens for the Olympic games, as he had before done the rude barbarians of Scythia. Though his taste was by no means untainted by the frivolities of the rhetorician, he was skilled in all the arts that awaken curiosity and attention, and his eloquence commanded the most various audiences in the most distant lands. His special mission, however, was to popularise Stoicism by diffusing its principles through the masses of mankind.*

The names, and in some cases a few fragments of the writings, of many other rhetorical philosophers, such as Herod Atticus, Favorinus, Fronto, Taurus, Fabianus, and Julianus, have come down to us, and each was the centre of a group of passionate admirers, and contributed to form a literary society in the great cities of the Empire. We have a vivid picture of this movement in the *Attic Nights* of Aulus Gellius—a work which is, I think, one of the most curious and instructive in Latin literature, and which bears to the literary society of the period of the Antonines much the same relation as the writings of Helvétius bear to the Parisian society on the eve of the Revolution. Helvétius, it is said, collected the materials for his great work on *Mind* chiefly from the conversation of the drawing-rooms of Paris at a time when that conversation had attained a degree of perfection which even Frenchmen had never before equalled. He wrote in the age of the *Encyclopædia*, when the social and political convulsions of the Revolution were as yet unfelt; when the first dazzling gleams of intellectual freedom had flashed upon a society long clouded by superstition and aristocratic pride; when the genius of Voltaire and the peerless conversational powers of Diderot, irradiating the bold philosophies of Bacon and Locke, had kindled an intellectual enthusiasm through all the ranks of fashion;† and when the contempt for the wisdom and the methods of the past was

only equalled by the prevailing confidence in the future. Brilliant, graceful, versatile, and superficial, with easy eloquence and lax morals, with a profound disbelief in moral excellence, and an intense appreciation of intellectual beauty, disdaining all pedantry, superstition, and mystery, and with an almost fanatical persuasion of the omnipotence of analysis, he embodied the principles of his contemporaries in a philosophy which represents all virtue and heroism as but disguised self-interest; he illustrated every argument, not by the pedantic learning of the schools, but by the sparkling anecdotes and acute literary criticisms of the drawing-room; and he thus produced a work which, besides its intrinsic merits, was the most perfect mirror of the society from which it sprang.‡ Very different, in form, subject, and tendency, but not less truly representative, was the work of Aulus Gellius. It is the journal, the common-place book, or miscellany of a scholar moving in the centre of the literary society of both Rome and Athens during the latter period of the Antonines, profoundly imbued with its spirit, and devoting his leisure to painting its leading figures, and compiling the substance of their teaching. Few books exhibit a more curious picture of the combination of intense childlike literary and moral enthusiasm with the most hopeless intellectual degeneracy. Each prominent philosopher was surrounded by a train of enthusiastic disciples, who made the lecture-room resound with their applause,* and accepted him as their monitor in all the affairs of life. He rebuked publicly every instance of vice or of affectation he had observed in their conduct, received them at his own table, became their friend and confidant in their troubles, and sometimes assisted them by his advice in their professional duties.† Taurus, Favorinus, Fronto, and Atticus were the

* The saying of Mme. Dudeffand about Helvétius is well known. "C'est un homme qui a dit le secret de tout le monde." How truly Helvétius represented this fashionable society appears very plainly from the vivid portrait of it in the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, part ii. letter xvii., a masterpiece of its kind.

† Musonius tried to stop this custom of applauding the lecturer. (Aul. Gell. *Noct.* v. i.) The habits that were formed in the schools of the rhetoricians were sometimes carried into the churches, and we have notices of preachers (especially St. Chrysostom) being vociferously applauded.

‡ Thus Gellius himself consulted Favorinus about a perplexing case which he had, in his capacity of magistrate, to determine, and received from his master a long dissertation on the duties of a judge (xiv. 2).

† See the singularly charming essay on Dion Chrysostom, in M. Martha's book.

* Mr. Buckle, in his admirable chapter on the "Proximate Causes of the French Revolution" (*History of Civilisation*, vol. i.), has painted this fashionable enthusiasm for knowledge with great power, and illustrated it with ample learning.

most prominent figures, and each seems to have formed, in the centre of a corrupt society, a little company of young men devoted with the simplest and most ardent earnestness to the cultivation of intellectual and moral excellence. Yet this society was singularly puerile. The age of genius had closed, and the age of pedantry had succeeded it. Minute, curious, and fastidious verbal criticism of the great writers of the past was the chief occupation of the scholar, and the whole tone of his mind had become retrospective and even archaic. Ennius was esteemed a greater poet than Virgil, and Cato a greater prose writer than Cicero. It was the affectation of some to tessellate their conversation with antiquated and obsolete words.¹ The study of etymologies had risen into great favour, and curious questions of grammar and pronunciation were ardently debated. Logic, as in most ages of intellectual poverty, was greatly studied and prized. Bold speculations and original thought had almost ceased, but it was the delight of the philosophers to throw the arguments of great writers into the form of syllogisms, and to debate them according to the rules of the schools. The very amusements of the scholars took the form of a whimsical and puerile pedantry. Gellius recalls, with a thrill of emotion, those enchanting evenings when, their more serious studies being terminated, the disciples of Taurus assembled at the table of their master to pass the happy hours in discussing such questions as when a man can be said to die, whether in the last moment of life or in the first moment of death; or when he can be said to get up, whether when he is still on his bed or when he has just left it.² Sometimes they proposed to one another literary questions, as what old writer had employed some common word in a sense that had since become obsolete; or they discussed such syllogisms as these: "You have what you have not lost; you have not lost horns, therefore you have horns." "You are not what I am. I am a man; therefore you are not a man."³ As moralists, they exhibited a very genuine love of moral excellence, but of the same pedantic and retrospective character. They were continually dilating on the

regulations of the censors and the customs of the earliest period of the Republic. They acquired the habit of never enforcing the simplest lesson without illustrating it by a profusion of ancient examples and by detached sentences from some philosopher, which they employed much as texts of Scripture are often employed in the writings of the Puritans.⁴ Above all, they delighted in cases of conscience, which they discussed with the subtlety of the schoolmen.

Lactantius has remarked that the Stoics were especially noted for the popular or democratic character of their teaching.⁵ To their success in this respect their alliance with the rhetoricians probably largely contributed; but in other ways it hastened the downfall of the school. The useless speculations, refinements, and paradoxes which the subtle genius of Chrysippus had connected with the simple morals of Stoicism, had been for the most part thrown into the background by the early Roman Stoics; but in the teaching of the rhetoricians they became supreme. The endowments given by the Antonines to philosophers attracted a multitude of impostors, who wore long beards and the dress of the philosopher, but whose lives were notoriously immoral. The Cynics especially, professing to reject the ordinary conventionalities of society, and being under none of that discipline or superintendence which in the worst period has secured at least external morality among the mendicant monks, continually threw off every vestige of virtue and of decency. Instead of moulding great characters and inspiring heroic actions, Stoicism became a school of the idlest casuistry, or the cloak for manifest in-posture.⁶ The very generation which saw Marcus Aurelius on the throne saw also the extinction of the influence of his sect.

The internal causes of the decadence of Stoicism, though very powerful, are in-

¹ We have a curious example of this in a letter of Marcus Aurelius preserved by Gallicanus in his *Life of Avidius Cassius*.

² "Senserunt hoc Stoici qui servis et mulieribus philosophandum esse dixerunt" (Lact. *Nat. Div.* iii. 25). Zeno was often reproached for gathering the poorest and most sordid around him when he lectured. (Diog. Laërt. *Zeno*.)

³ This decadence was noticed and rebuked by some of the leading philosophers. See the language of Epictetus in Arrian. ii. 16, iv. 8, and of Herod Articus in Aul. Gell. i. 2. ix. 2. St. Augustine speaks of the Cynics as having in his time sunk into universal contempt. See much evidence on this subject in Friedländer, *Hist. des auteurs Romains*, tome iv. 37-385.

¹ Aul. Gell. *Noct. Att.* i. 10.

² *Ibid.* vi. 13. They called these questions *symposiaca*, as being well fitted to stimulate minds already mellowed by wine.

³ xviii. 2

sufficient to explain this complete eclipse. The chief cause must be found in the fact that the minds of men had taken a new turn, and their enthusiasm was flowing rapidly in the direction of Oriental religions, and, under the guidance of Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Proclus, of a mystical philosophy which was partly Egyptian and partly Platonic. It remains for me, in concluding this review of the pagan Empire, to indicate and explain this last transformation of pagan morals.

It was, in the first place, a very natural reaction against the extreme aridity of the Stoical casuistry, and also against the scepticism which Sextus Empiricus had revived, and in this respect it represents a law of the human mind which has been more than once illustrated in later times. Thus, the captious, unsatisfying, intellectual subtleties of the schoolmen were met by the purely emotional and mystical school of St. Bonaventura, and afterwards of Tauler; and thus the adoration of the human intellect, that was general in the philosophy of the last [eighteenth] century, prepared the way for the complete denial of its competency by De Maistre and by Lamennais.

In the next place, mysticism was a normal continuation of the spiritualising movement which had long been advancing. We have already seen that the strong tendency of ethics, from Cato to Marcus Aurelius, was to enlarge the prominence of the emotions in the type of virtue. The formation of a gentle, a spiritual, and, in a word, a religious character had become a prominent part of moral culture, and it was regarded not simply as a means, but as an end. Still, both Marcus Aurelius and Cato were Stoics. They both represented the same general cast or conception of virtue, although in Marcus Aurelius the type had been profoundly modified. But the time was soon to come when the balance between the practical and the emotional parts of virtue, which had been steadily changing, should be decisively turned in favour of the latter, and the type of Stoicism was then necessarily discarded.

A concurrence of political and commercial causes had arisen, very favourable to the propagation of Oriental beliefs. Commerce had produced a constant intercourse between Egypt and Italy. Great numbers of Oriental slaves, passionately devoted to their national religions, existed

in Rome; and Alexandria, which combined a great intellectual development with a geographical and commercial position exceedingly favourable to a fusion of many doctrines, soon created a school of thought which acted powerfully upon the world. Four great systems of eclecticism arose; Aristobulus and Philo tintured Judaism with Greek and Egyptian philosophy. The Gnostics and the Alexandrian Fathers united, though in very different proportions, Christian doctrines with the same elements; while Neo-Platonism, at least in its later forms, represented a fusion of the Greek and Egyptian mind. A great analogy was discovered between the ideal philosophy of Plato and the mystical philosophy that was indigenous to the East, and the two systems readily blended.*

But the most powerful cause of the movement was the intense desire for positive religious belief, which had long been growing in the Empire. The period when Roman incredulity reached its extreme point had been the century that preceded and the half century that followed the birth of Christ. The sudden dissolution of the old habits of the Republic effected through political causes, the first comparison of the multitudinous religions of the Empire, and also the writings of Euhemerus, had produced an absolute religious disbelief, which Epicureanism represented and encouraged. This disbelief, however, as I have already noticed, co-existed with numerous magical and astrological superstitions, and the ignorance of physical science was so great, and the conception of general laws so faint, that the materials for a great revival of superstition still remained. From the middle of the first century, a more believing and reverent spirit began to arise. The worship of Isis and Serapis forced its way into Rome, in spite of the opposition of the rulers. Apollonius of Tyana, at the close of the Flavian period, had endeavoured to unite moral teaching with religious practices; the oracles, which had long ceased, were partially restored under the Antonines; the calamities and visible decline of the Empire withdrew the minds of men from that proud patriotic worship of Roman greatness which was long a substitute for

* This movement is well treated by Vacherot, *Hist. de l'École d'Alexandrie*.

religious feeling ; and the frightful pestilence that swept over the land in the reigns of Marcus Aurelius and his successor was followed by a blind, feverish, and spasmodic superstition. Besides this, men have never acquiesced for any considerable time in a neglect of the great problems of the origin, nature, and destinies of the soul, or dispensed with some form of religious worship and aspiration. That religious instincts are as truly a part of our nature as are our appetites and our nerves is a fact which all history establishes, and which forms one of the strongest proofs of the reality of that unseen world to which the soul of man continually tends. Early Roman Stoicism, which in this respect somewhat resembled the modern Positive school, diverted for the most part its votaries from the great problems of religion, and attempted to evolve its entire system of ethics out of existing human nature, without appealing to any external supernatural sanction. But the Platonic school, and the Egyptian school which connected itself with the name of Pythagoras, were both essentially religious. The first aspired to the Deity as the source and model of virtue, admitted dæmons or subordinate spiritual agents acting upon mankind, and explained and purified, in no hostile spirit, the popular religions. The latter made the state of ecstasy or quietism its ideal condition, and sought to purify the mind by theurgy or special religious rites. Both philosophies conspired to effect a great religious reformation, in which the Greek spirit usually represented the rational, and the Egyptian the mystical, element.

Of the first, Plutarch was the head. He taught the supreme authority of reason. He argued elaborately that superstition is worse than atheism, for it calumniates the character of the Deity, and its evils are not negative, but positive. At the same time, he is far from regarding the Mythology as a tissue of fables. Some things he denies. Others he explains away. Others he frankly accepts. He teaches for the most part a pure monotheism, which he reconciles with the common belief, partly by describing the different divinities as simply popular personifications of Divine attributes, and partly by the usual explanation of dæmons. He discarded most of the fables of the poets, applying to them with fearless severity the tests of human

morality, and rejecting indignantly those which attribute to the Deity cruel or immoral actions. He denounces all religious terrorism, and draws a broad line of distinction between both the superstitious and idolatrous conception of the Deity on the one hand, and the philosophical conception on the other. "The superstitious man believes in the gods, but he has a false idea of their nature. Those good beings whose providence watches over us with so much care, those beings so ready to forget our faults, he represents as ferocious and cruel tyrants, taking pleasure in tormenting us. He believes the founders of brass, the sculptors of stone, the moulders of wax ; he attributes to the gods a human form ; he adorns and worships the image he has made, and he listens not to the philosophers and men of knowledge, who associate the Divine image, not with bodily beauty, but with grandeur and majesty, with gentleness and goodness." On the other hand, Plutarch believed that there was undoubtedly a certain supernatural basis in the pagan creed ; he believed in oracles ; he defended, in a very ingenious essay, hereditary punishment, and the doctrine of a special Providence ; he admitted a future retribution, though he repudiated the notion of physical torment ; and he brought into clear relief the moral teaching conveyed in some of the fables of the poets.

The position which Plutarch occupied under Trajan, Maximus of Tyre occupied in the next generation. Like Plutarch, but with a greater consistency, he maintained a pure monotheistic doctrine, declaring that "Zeus is that most ancient and guiding mind that begot all things—Athena is prudence—Apollo is the sun."¹ Like Plutarch, he developed the Platonic doctrine of dæmons as an explanation of much of the mythology, and he applied an allegorical interpretation with great freedom to the fables of Homer, which formed the text-book or the Bible of Paganism. By these means he endeavoured to clarify the popular creed from all elements inconsistent with a pure monotheism, and from all legends of doubtful morality, while he sublimated the popular worship into a harmless symbolism. "The gods," he assures us, "themselves need no images," but the in-

¹ *De Superstiti. no.*

² *Dissertationes*, x. § 8 (ed. Davis, London, 1740). In some editions this is *Dies xxix*.

firmity of human nature requires visible signs "on which to rest." "Those who possess such faculties, that with a steady mind they can rise to heaven, and to God, are in no need of statues. But such men are very rare." He then proceeds to recount the different ways by which men have endeavoured to represent or symbolise the Divine nature, as the statues of Greece, the animals of Egypt, or the sacred flame of Persia. "The God," he continues, "the Father and the Founder of all that exists, older than the sun, older than the sky, greater than all time, than every age, and than all the works of nature, whom no words can express, whom no eye can see.....What can we say concerning his images? Only let men understand that there is but one Divine nature; but whether the art of Phidias chiefly preserves his memory among the Greeks, or the worship of animals among the Egyptians, a river among these, or a flame among those, I do not blame the variety of the representations—only let men understand that there is but one; only let them love one, let them preserve one in their memory."¹

A third writer who, nearly at the same time as Maximus of Tyre, made some efforts in the same direction, was Apuleius, who, however, both as a moral teacher and in his freedom from superstition, was far inferior to the preceding. The religion he most admired was the Egyptian; but in his philosophy he was a Platonist, and in that capacity, besides an exposition of the Platonic code of morals, he has left us a singularly clear and striking disquisition on the doctrine of dæmons. "These dæmons," he says, "are the bearers of blessings and prayers between the inhabitants of earth and heaven, carrying prayers from the one and assistance from the other.....By them also, as Plato maintained in his *Banquet*, all revelations, all the various miracles of magicians, all kinds of omens, are ruled. They have their several tasks to perform, their different departments to govern; some directing dreams, others the disposition of the entrails, others the flight of birds.The supreme deities do not descend to these things—they leave them to the intermediate divinities."² But these intermediate spirits are not simply the agents of supernatural phenomena—they are also the guardians of our virtue and

the recorders of our actions. "Each man has in life witnesses and guards of his deeds, visible to no one, but always present, witnessing not only every act but every thought. When life has ended and we must return whence we came, the same genius who had charge over us takes us away and hurries us in his custody to judgment, and then assists us in pleading our cause. If anything is falsely asserted, he corrects it—if true, he substantiates it, and according to his witness our sentence is determined."³

There are many aspects in which these attempts at religious reform are both interesting and important. They are interesting because the doctrine of dæmons, mingled, it is true, with the theory of Euhemerus about the origin of the deities, was universally accepted by the Fathers as the true explanation of the pagan theology; because the notion and, after the third century, even the artistic type of the guardian genius reappeared in that of the guardian angel; and because the transition from polytheism to the conception of a single deity acting by the delegation or ministration of an army of subsidiary spirits, was manifestly fitted to prepare the way for the reception of Christianity. They are interesting, too, as showing the anxiety of the human mind to sublimate its religious creed to the level of the moral and intellectual standard it had attained, and to make religious ordinances in some degree the instruments of moral improvement. But they are interesting above all because the Greek and Egyptian methods of reform represent with typical distinctness the two great tendencies of religious thought in all succeeding periods. The Greek spirit was essentially rationalistic and eclectic; the Egyptian spirit was essentially mystical and devotional. The Greek sat in judgment upon his religion. He modified, curtailed, refined, allegorised, or selected. He treated its inconsistencies, or absurdities, or immoralities, with precisely the same freedom of criticism as those he encountered in ordinary life. The Egyptian, on the other hand, bowed low before the Divine presence. He veiled his eyes, he humbled his reason, he represented the introduction of a new element into the moral life of Europe, the spirit of religious reverence and awe.

¹ *De Dæmone Socratis*. See, on the office of dæmons or genii, Arrian i. 14, and a curious chapter in Ammianus Marcell. xxi. 14. See, too, Plotinus, 3rd *Enn.* lib. iv.

² *Dissert.* xxxviii.

³ *De Dæmone Socratis*.

"The Egyptian deities," it was observed by Apuleius, "were chiefly honoured by lamentations, and the Greek divinities by dances." The truth of the last part of this very significant remark appears in every page of Greek history. No nation had a richer collection of games and festivals growing out of its religious system; in none did a light, sportive, and often licentious fancy play more fearlessly around the popular creed, in none was religious terrorism more rare. The Divinity was seldom looked upon as holier than man, and a due observance of certain rites and ceremonies was deemed an ample tribute to pay to him. In the Egyptian system the religious ceremonies were veiled in mystery and allegory. Chastity, abstinence from animal food, ablutions, long and mysterious ceremonies of preparation or initiation, were the most prominent features of worship. The deities representing the great forces of nature, and shrouded by mysterious symbols, excited a degree of awe which no other ancient religion approached.

The speculative philosophy, and the conceptions of morals, that accompanied the inroad of Oriental religions, were of a kindred nature. The most prominent characteristic of the first was its tendency to supersede the deductions of the reason by the intuitions of ecstasy. Neo-Platonism and the philosophies that were allied to it were fundamentally pantheistic,* but they differed widely from the pantheism of the Stoics. The Stoics identified man with God, for the purpose of glorifying man—the Neo-Platonists for the purpose of aggrandising God. In the conception of the first, man, independent, self-controlled, and participating in the highest nature of the universe, has no superior in creation. According to the latter, man is almost a passive being, swayed and permeated by a divine impulse. Yet he is not altogether divine. The divinity is latent in his soul, but dulled, dimmed, and crushed by the tyranny of the body. "To bring the God that is in us into conformity with the God that is in the universe," to elicit the ideas that are graven in the mind, but obscured and hidden by the passions of the flesh—above all, to subdue the body, which is

the sole obstacle to our complete fruition of the Deity—was the main object of life. Porphyry described all philosophy as an anticipation of death—not in the Stoical sense of teaching us to look calmly on our end, but because death realises the ideal of philosophy, the complete separation of soul and body. Hence, followed an ascetic morality, and a supersensual philosophy. "The greatest of all evils," we are told, "is pleasure; because by it the soul is nailed or riveted to the body, and thinks that true which the body persuades it, and is thus deprived of the sense of divine things." "Justice, beauty, and goodness, and all things that are formed by them, no eye has ever seen, no bodily sense can apprehend. Philosophy must be pursued by pure and unmingled reason and with deadened senses; for the body disturbs the mind, so that it cannot follow after wisdom. As long as it is lost and mingled in the clay we shall never sufficiently possess the truth we desire."²

But the reason which is thus extolled as the revealer of truth must not be confounded with the process of reasoning. It is something quite different from criticism, analysis, comparison, or deduction. It is essentially intuitive, but it only acquires its power of transcendental intuition after a long process of discipline. When a man passes from the daylight into a room which is almost dark, he is at first absolutely unable to see the objects around him; but gradually his eye grows accustomed to the feeble light, the outline of the room becomes dimly visible, object after object emerges into sight, until at last, by intently gazing, he acquires the power of seeing around him with tolerable distinctness. In this fact we have a partial image of the Neo-Platonic doctrine of the knowledge of divine things. Our soul is a dark chamber, darkened by contact with the flesh, but in it there are graven divine ideas, there exists a living divine element. The eye of reason, by long and steady introspection, can learn to decipher these characters; the will, aided by an appointed course of discipline, can evoke this divine element, and cause it to blend with the

* *De Damone Socratis.*

² I should except Plotinus, however, who was faithful in this point to Plato, and was in consequence much praised by the Christian Fathers.

* "Omnium malorum maximum voluptas, qua tanquam clavo et fibula anima corpori necitur, putatque vera quæ et corpus suadet, et ita spontatur rerum divinarum aspectu" (Iamblichus, *De Vita Pythagor.* Romæ, 1556, p. 38. Plotinus, 1st *Enn.* vi. 6.)

² *De Sect. Pyth.* pp. 36, 37.

universal spirit from which it sprang. The powers of mental concentration, and of metaphysical abstraction, are therefore the highest intellectual gifts; and quietism, or the absorption of our nature in God, is the last stage of virtue. "The end of man," said Pythagoras, "is God." The mysterious "One," the metaphysical abstraction without attributes and without form which constitutes the First Person of the Alexandrian Trinity, is the acme of human thought, and the condition of ecstasy is the acme of moral perfection. Plotinus, it was said, had several times attained it; Porphyry, after years of discipline, once, and but once.¹ The process of reasoning is here not only useless, but pernicious. "An innate knowledge of the gods is implanted in our minds prior to all reasoning."² In divine things the task of man is not to create or to acquire, but to educe. His means of perfection are not dialectics or research, but long and patient meditation, silence, abstinence from the distractions and occupations of life, the subjugation of the flesh, a life of continual discipline, a constant attendance on those mysterious rites which detach him from material objects, overawe and elevate his mind, and quicken his realisation of the Divine presence.³

The system of Neo-Platonism represents a mode of thought which in many forms, and under many names, may be traced through the most various ages and creeds. Mysticism, transcendentalism, inspiration, and grace, are all words expressing the deep-seated belief that we possess fountains of knowledge apart from all the acquisitions of the senses; that there are certain states of mind, certain flashes of moral and intellectual illumination, which cannot be accounted for by any play or combination of our ordinary faculties. For the sobriety, the timidity, the fluctuations of the reasoning spirit, Neo-Platonism substituted the transports of the imagination; and, though it cultivated the power of abstraction, every other intellectual gift was sacrificed to the discipline of asceticism. It made men credulous, because it suppressed that critical spirit which is the sole barrier to the ever-encroaching imagination; because it represented superstitious rites as

especially conducive to that state of ecstasy which was the condition of revelation; because it formed a nervous, diseased, expectant temperament, ever prone to hallucinations, ever agitated by vague and uncertain feelings that were readily attributed to inspiration. As a moral system it carried, indeed, the purification of the feelings and imagination to a higher perfection than any preceding school, but it had the deadly fault of separating sentiment from action. In this respect it was well fitted to be the close, the final suicide, of Roman philosophy. Cicero assigned a place of happiness in the future world to all who faithfully served the State.⁴ The Stoics had taught that all virtue was vain that did not issue in action. Even Epictetus, in his portrait of the ascetic Cynic—even Marcus Aurelius, in his minute self-examination—had never forgotten the outer world. The early Platonists, though they dwelt very strongly on mental discipline, were equally practical. Plutarch reminds us that the same word is used for light and for man,⁵ for the duty of man is to be the light of the world; and he shrewdly remarked that Hesiod exhorted the husbandman to pray for the harvest, but to do so with his hand upon the plough. Apuleius, expounding Plato, taught "that he who is inspired by nature to seek after good must not deem himself born for himself alone, but for all mankind, though with diverse kinds and degrees of obligation, for he is formed first of all for his country, then for his relations, then for those with whom he is joined by occupation or knowledge." Maximus of Tyre devoted two noble essays to showing the vanity of all virtue which exhausts itself in mental transports without radiating in action among mankind. "What use," he asked, "is there in knowledge unless we do those things for which knowledge is profitable? What use is there in the skill of the physician unless by that skill he heals the sick, or in the art of Phidias unless he chisels the ivory or the gold?.....Hercules was a wise man, but not for himself, but that by his

¹ "Sic habeto, omnibus qui patriam conservaverint, adjuverint, auxerint, certum esse in celo ac definitum locum ubi beati ævo sempiterno fruatur." (Cic. *Sonn. Scip.*)

² φῶς, which, according to Plutarch (who here confuses two distinct words), is poetically used for man (*De Latenter Vivendo*). A similar thought occurs in M. Aurelius, who speaks of the good man as light which only ceases to shine when it ceases to be.

¹ Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*.

² Iamblichus, *De Mystero*, i.

³ See, on this doctrine of ecstasy, Vacherot, *Hist. de l'École d'Alexandrie*, tome i. p. 576, etc.

wisdom he might diffuse benefit over every land and sea.....Had he preferred to lead a life apart from men, and to follow an idle wisdom, Hercules would indeed have been a Sophist, and no one would call him the son of Zeus. For God Himself is never idle; were He to rest, the sky would cease to move, and the earth to produce, and the rivers to flow into the ocean, and the seasons to pursue their appointed course."¹ But the Neo-Platonists, though they sometimes spoke of civic virtues, regarded the condition of ecstasy as not only transcending, but including all, and that condition could only be arrived at by a passive life. The saying of Anaxagoras, that his mission was "to contemplate the sun, the stars, and the course of nature, and that this contemplation was wisdom," was accepted as an epitome of their philosophy.² A senator named Rogatianus, who had followed the teaching of Plotinus, acquired so intense a disgust for the things of life, that he left all his property, refused to fulfil the duties of a prætor, abandoned his senatorial functions, and withdrew himself from every form of business and pleasure. Plotinus, instead of reproaching him, overwhelmed him with eulogy, selected him as his favourite disciple, and continually represented him as the model of a philosopher.³

The two characteristics I have noticed—the abandonment of civil duties and the discouragement of the critical spirit—had from a very early period been manifest in the Pythagorean school.⁴ In the blending philosophies of the third and fourth centuries they became continually more apparent. Plotinus was still an independent philosopher, inheriting the traditions of Greek thought, though not the traditions of Greek life, building his system avowedly by a rational method, and altogether rejecting theurgy or religious magic. His disciple, Porphyry, first made Neo-Platonism anti-Christian, and, in his violent antipathy to the new

faith, began to convert it into a religious system. Iamblichus, who was himself an Egyptian priest, completed the transformation,⁵ resolved all moral discipline into theurgy, and sacrificed all reasoning to faith.⁶ Julian attempted to realise the conception of a revived Paganism, blending with and purified by philosophy. In every form the appetite for miracles and for belief was displayed. The theory of dæmons completely superseded the old Stoical naturalism, which regarded the different pagan divinities as allegories or personifications of the Divine attributes. The Platonic ethics were again, for the most part, in the ascendant, but they were deeply tinctured by a foreign element. Thus, suicide was condemned by the Neo-Platonists, not merely on the principle of Plato, that it is an abandonment of the post of duty to which the Deity has called us, but also on the quietist ground, that perturbation is necessarily a pollution of the soul, and that, as mental perturbation accompanies the act, the soul of the suicide departs polluted from the body.⁷ The belief in a future world, which was the common glory of the schools of Pythagoras and of Plato, had become universal. As Roman greatness, in which men had long seen the reward of virtue, faded rapidly away, the conception of "a city of God" began to grow more clearly in the minds of men, and the countless slaves who were among the chief propagators of Oriental faiths, and who had begun to exercise an unprecedented influence in Roman life, turned with a natural and a touching eagerness towards a happier and a freer world.⁸ The incredulity of Lucretius, Cæsar, and Pliny had disappeared. Above all, a fusion had been effected between moral discipline and religion, and the moralist sought his chief means of purification in the ceremonies of the temple.

I have now completed the long and complicated task to which the present

¹ *Diss.* xxi. § 6.

² Iamblichus, *De Sect. Pythagoræ*, p. 33.

³ Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*, cap. viii.; Plotinus, 1st *Enn.* iv. 7. See on this subject Degerando, *Hist. de la Philos.* iii. p. 383.

⁴ Thus it was said of Apollonius that in his teaching at Ephesus he did not speak after the manner of the followers of Socrates, but endeavoured to detach his disciples from all occupation other than philosophy. (Philost. *Apoll. of Tyana*, iv. 2.) Cicero notices the aversion the Pythagoreans of his time displayed to argument: "Quum ex his quereretur quare ita esset, responderet solitos, Ipse dixit; ipse autem erat Pythagoras." (*De Nat. Deor.* l. 5.)

⁵ See Vacherot, tome ii. p. 66.

⁶ See Degerando, *Hist. de la Philosophie*, tome iii. pp. 400, 401.

⁷ Plotinus, 1st *Enn.* iv.

⁸ See a strong passage, on the universality of this belief, in Plotinus, 1st *Enn.* l. 12, and Origen, *Cont. Gens.* vii. A very old tradition represented the Egyptians as the first people who held the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Cicero (*Tusc. Quæst.*) says that the Syrian Pherecydes, master of Pythagoras, first taught it. Maximus of Tyre attributes its origin to Pythagoras, and his slave Zeno is said to have introduced it into Greece. Others say that Thales first taught it. None of these assertions have any real historical value.

chapter has been devoted. I have endeavoured to exhibit, so far as can be done, by a description of general tendencies, and by a selection of quotations, the spirit of a long series of Pagan moralists who taught at Rome during the period that elapsed between the rise of Roman philosophy and the triumph of Christianity. My object has not been to classify these writers with minute accuracy, according to their speculative tenets, but rather, as I had proposed, to exhibit the origin, the nature, and the fortunes of the general notion or type of virtue which each moralist had regarded as supremely good. History is not a mere succession of events connected only by chronology. It is a chain of causes and effects. There is a great natural difference of degree and direction in both the moral and intellectual capacities of individuals, but it is not probable that the general average of natural morals in great bodies of men materially varies. When we find a society very virtuous or very vicious—when some particular virtue or vice occupies a peculiar prominence, or when important changes pass over the moral conceptions or standard of the people—we have to trace in these things simply the action of the circumstances that were dominant. The history of Roman ethics represents a steady and uniform current, guided by the general conditions of society, and its progress may be marked by the successive ascendancy of the Roman, the Greek, and the Egyptian spirit.

In the age of Cato and Cicero the character of the ideal was wholly Roman, although the philosophical expression of that character was derived from the Greek Stoics. It exhibited all the force, the grandeur, the hardness, the practical tendency which Roman circumstances had early created, combined with that catholicity of spirit which resulted from very recent political and intellectual changes. In the course of time, the Greek element, which represented the gentler and more humane spirit of antiquity, gained an ascendancy. It did so by simple propagandism, aided by the long peace of the Antonines, by the effeminate habits produced by the increasing luxury, by the attractions of the metropolis, which had drawn multitudes of Greeks to Rome, by the patronage of the emperors, and also by the increasing realisation of the doctrine of universal brotherhood, which Panætius and Cicero had

asserted, but of which the full consequences were only perceived by their successors. The change in the type of virtue was shown in the influence of eclectic, and for the most part Platonic, moralists, whose special assaults were directed against the Stoical condemnation of the emotions, and in the gradual softening of the Stoical type. In Seneca the hardness of the sect, though very apparent, is broken by precepts of a real and extensive benevolence, though that benevolence springs rather from a sense of duty than from tenderness of feeling. In Dion Chrysostom the practical benevolence is not less prominent, but there is less both of pride and of callousness. Epictetus embodied the sternest Stoicism in his *Manual*, but his dissertations exhibit a deep religious feeling and a wide range of sympathies. In Marcus Aurelius the emotional elements had greatly increased, and the amiable qualities began to predominate over the heroic ones. We find at the same time a new stress laid upon purity of thought and imagination, a growing feeling of reverence, and an earnest desire to reform the popular religion.

This second stage exhibits a happy combination of the Roman and Greek spirits. Disinterested, strictly practical, averse to the speculative subtleties of the Greek intellect, Stoicism was still the religion of a people who were the rulers and the organisers of the world, whose enthusiasm was essentially patriotic, and who had learnt to sacrifice everything but pride to the sense of duty. It had, however, become amiable, gentle, and spiritual. It had gained much in beauty, while it had lost something in force. In the world of morals, as in the world of physics, strength is nearly allied to hardness. He who feels keenly is easily moved, and a sensitive sympathy, which lies at the root of an amiable character, is in consequence a principle of weakness. The race of great Roman Stoics, which had never ceased during the tyranny of Nero or Domitian, began to fail. In the very moment when the ideal of the sect had attained its supreme perfection a new movement appeared, the philosophy sank into disrepute, and the last act of the drama began.

In this, as in the preceding ones, all was normal and regular. The long continuance of despotic government had gradually destroyed the active public

spirit of which Stoicism was the expression. The predominance of the subtle intellect of Greece, and the multiplication of rhetoricians, had converted the philosophy into a school of disputation and of casuistry. The increasing cultivation of the emotions continued, till what may be termed the moral centre was changed, and the development of feeling was deemed more important than the regulation of actions. This cultivation of the emotions predisposed men to religion. A reaction, intensified by many minor causes, set in against the scepticism of the preceding generation, and Alexandria gradually became the moral capital of the Empire. The Roman type speedily disappeared. A union was effected between superstitious rites and philosophy, and the worship of Egyptian deities prepared the way for the teaching of the Neo-Platonists, who combined the most visionary part of the speculations of Plato with the ancient philosophies of the East. In Plotinus we find most of the first; in Iamblichus most of the second. The minds of men, under their influence, grew introspective, credulous, and superstitious, and found their ideal states in the hallucinations of ecstasy and the calm of an impractical mysticism.

Such were the influences which acted in turn upon a society which, by despotism, by slavery, and by atrocious amusements, had been debased and corrupted to the very core. Each sect which successively arose contributed something to remedy the evil. Stoicism placed beyond cavil the great distinctions between right and wrong. It inculcated the doctrine of universal brotherhood, it created a noble literature and a noble legislation, and it associated its moral system with the patriotic spirit which was

then the animating spirit of Roman life. The early Platonists of the Empire corrected the exaggerations of Stoicism, gave free scope to the amiable qualities, and supplied a theory of right and wrong, suited not merely for heroic characters and for extreme emergencies, but also for the characters and the circumstances of common life. The Pythagorean and Neo-Platonic schools revived the feeling of religious reverence, inculcated humility, prayerfulness, and purity of thought, and accustomed men to associate their moral ideals with the Deity, rather than with themselves.

The moral improvement of society was now to pass into other hands. A religion which had long been increasing in obscurity began to emerge into the light. By the beauty of its moral precepts, by the systematic skill with which it governed the imagination and habits of its worshippers, by the strong religious motives to which it could appeal, by its admirable ecclesiastical organisation, and, it must be added, by its unsparing use of the arm of power, Christianity soon eclipsed or destroyed all other sects, and became for many centuries the supreme ruler of the moral world. Combining the Stoical doctrine of universal brotherhood, the Greek predilection for the amiable qualities, and the Egyptian spirit of reverence and religious awe, it acquired from the first an intensity and universality of influence which none of the philosophies it had superseded had approached. I have now to examine the moral causes that governed the rise of this religion in Rome, the ideal of virtue it presented, the degree and manner in which it stamped its image upon the character of nations, and the perversions and distortions it underwent.

CHAPTER III.

THE CONVERSION OF ROME

THERE is no fact in the history of the human mind more remarkable than the complete unconsciousness of the importance and the destinies of Christianity, manifested by the pagan writers before the accession of Constantine. So large an amount of attention has been bestowed on the ten or twelve allusions to it they furnish, that we are sometimes apt to forget how few and meagre those allusions are, and how utterly impossible it is to construct from them, with any degree of certainty, a history of the early Church. Plutarch and the elder Pliny, who probably surpass all other writers of their time in the range of their illustrations, and Seneca, who was certainly the most illustrious moralist of his age, never even mention it. Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius have each adverted to it with a passing and contemptuous censure. Tacitus describes in detail the persecution by Nero, but treats the suffering religion merely as "an execrable superstition"; while Suetonius, employing the same expression, reckons the persecution among the acts of the tyrant that were either laudable or indifferent. Our most important document is the famous letter of the younger Pliny. Lucian throws some light both on the extent of Christian charity and on the aspect in which Christians were regarded by the religious jugglers of their age; and the long series of pagans who wrote the lives of the emperors in that most critical period from the accession of Hadrian, almost to the eve of the triumph of the Church, among a crowd of details concerning the dresses, games, vices, and follies of the Court, supply us with six or seven short notices of the religion that was transforming the world.

The general silence of the pagan writers on this subject did not arise from any restrictions imposed upon them by authority, for in this field the widest latitude was conceded; nor yet from the notions of the dignity of history, or the impor-

tance of individual exertions, which have induced some historians to resolve their task into a catalogue of the achievements of kings, statesmen, and generals. The conception of history, as the record and explanation of moral revolutions, though of course not developed to the same prominence as among some modern writers, was by no means unknown in antiquity,¹ and in many branches our knowledge of the social changes of the Roman Empire is extremely copious. The dissolution of old beliefs, the decomposition of the entire social and moral system that had arisen under the Republic, engaged in the very highest degree the attention of the literary classes, and they displayed the most commendable diligence in tracing its stages. It is very curious and instructive to contrast the ample information they have furnished us concerning the growth of Roman luxury with their almost absolute silence concerning the growth of Christianity. The moral importance of the former movement they clearly recognised, and they have accordingly preserved so full a record of all the changes in dress, banquets, buildings, and spectacles, that it would be possible to write with the most minute detail the whole history of Roman luxury, from the day when a censor deprived an elector of his vote because his garden was negligently cultivated, to the orgies of Nero or Heliogabalus. The moral importance of the other movement they altogether overlooked, and their oversight leaves a chasm in history which can never be supplied.

That the greatest religious change in the history of mankind should have taken place under the eyes of a brilliant galaxy of philosophers and historians, who were

¹ We have a remarkable instance of the clearness with which some even of the most insignificant historians recognised the folly of confining history to the biographies of the emperors, in the opening chapter of Capitolinus, *Life of Macrinus*. Tacitus is full of beautiful episodes, describing the manners and religion of the people.

profoundly conscious of the decomposition around them; that all of these writers should have utterly failed to predict the issue of the movement they were observing; and that, during the space of three centuries, they should have treated as simply contemptible an agency which all men must now admit to have been, for good or for evil, the most powerful moral lever that has ever been applied to the affairs of man, are facts well worthy of meditation in every period of religious transition. The explanation is to be found in that broad separation between the spheres of morals and of positive religion which we have considered in the last chapter. In modern times, men who were examining the probable moral future of the world, would naturally, and in the first place, direct their attention to the relative positions and the probable destinies of religious institutions. In the Stoical period of the Roman Empire positive religion had come to be regarded as merely an art for obtaining preternatural assistance in the affairs of life, and the moral amelioration of mankind was deemed altogether external to its sphere. Philosophy had become to the educated most literally a religion. It was the rule of life, the exposition of the Divine nature, the source of devotional feeling. The numerous Oriental superstitions that had deluged the city were regarded as peculiarly pernicious and contemptible, and of these none was less likely to attract the favour of the philosophers than that of the Jews,¹ who were notorious as the most sordid, the most turbulent,² and the most unsocial³ of the Oriental colonists. Of the ignorance of their tenets displayed even by the most eminent Romans, we have a striking illustration in the long series of grotesque fables concerning their belief, probably derived from some satirical pamphlet, which Tacitus has gravely inserted in his history.⁴ Christianity, in the eyes of the philosopher, was simply a sect of Judaism.

Although I am anxious in the present work to avoid, as far as possible, all questions that are purely theological, and to consider Christianity merely in its aspect as a moral agent, it will be neces-

sary to bestow a few preliminary pages upon its triumph in the Roman Empire, in order to ascertain how far that triumph was due to moral causes, and what were its relations to the prevailing philosophy. There are some writers who have been so struck with the conformity between some of the doctrines of the later Stoics and those of Christianity that they have imagined that Christianity had early obtained a decisive influence over philosophy, and that the leading teachers of Rome had been in some measure its disciples. There are others who reduce the conversion of the Roman Empire to a mere question of evidences, to the overwhelming proofs the Christian teachers produced of the authenticity of the Gospel narratives. There are others, again, who deem the triumph of Christianity simply miraculous. Everything, they tell us, was against it. The course of the Church was like that of a ship sailing rapidly and steadily to the goal, in direct defiance of both wind and tide, and the conversion of the Empire was as literally supernatural as the raising of the dead, or the sudden quelling of the storm.

On the first of these theories it will not, I think, be necessary, after the last chapter, to expatiate at length. It is admitted that the greatest moralists of the Roman Empire either never mentioned Christianity, or mentioned it with contempt; that they habitually disregarded the many religions which had arisen among the ignorant; and that we have no direct evidence of the slightest value of their ever having come in contact with or favoured the Christians. The supposition that they were influenced by Christianity rests mainly upon their enforcement of the Christian duty of self-examination, upon their strong assertion of the universal brotherhood of mankind, and upon the delicate and expansive humanity they at last evinced. But although on all these points the later Stoics approximated much to Christianity, we have already seen that it is easy to discover in each case the cause of the tendency. The duty of self-examination was simply a Pythagorean precept, enforced in that school long before the rise of Christianity, introduced into Stoicism when Pythagoreanism became popular in Rome, and confessedly borrowed from this source. The doctrine of the universal brotherhood of mankind was the manifest expression of those political and social

¹ The passages relating to the Jews in Roman literature are collected in Aubertin's *Rapports supposés entre Sénèque et St.-Paul*. (Champagny, Rome et Judée, tome i. pp. 124-127.)

² Cicero, *Pro Flacco*, 28; Sueton., *Claudius*, 25.

³ Juvenal, *Sat.* xiv.

⁴ *Hist.* v.

changes which reduced the whole civilised globe to one great empire, threw open to the most distant tribes the right of Roman citizenship, and subverted all those class divisions around which moral theories had been formed. Cicero asserted it as emphatically as Seneca. The theory of pantheism, representing the entire creation as one great body, pervaded by one Divine soul, harmonised with it; and it is a curious fact that the very phraseology concerning the fellow-membership of all things in God, which has been most confidently adduced by some modern writers as proving the connection between Seneca and Christianity, was selected by Lactantius as the clearest illustration of the pantheism of Stoicism.¹ The humane character of the later Stoical teaching was obviously due to the infusion of the Greek element into Roman life, which began before the foundation of the Empire, and received a new impulse in the reign of Hadrian, and also to the softening influence of a luxurious civilisation, and of the long peace of the Antonines. While far inferior to the Greeks in practical and realised humanity, the Romans never surpassed their masters in theoretical humanity except in one respect. The humanity of the Greeks, though very earnest, was confined within a narrow circle. The social and political circumstances of the Roman Empire destroyed the barrier.

The only case in which any plausible arguments have been urged in favour of the notion that the writings of the Stoics were influenced by the New Testament is that of Seneca. This philosopher was regarded by all the mediæval writers as a Christian, on the ground of a correspondence with St. Paul, which formed part of a forged account of the martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul, attributed to St. Linus. These letters, which were absolutely unnoticed during the first three centuries, and are first mentioned by St. Jerome, are now almost universally abandoned as forgeries;² but many curious coincidences of phraseology have been pointed out between the writings of Seneca and the epistles of St. Paul; and

the presumption derived from them has been strengthened by the facts that the brother of Seneca was that Gallio who refused to hear the disputes between St. Paul and the Jews, and that Burrhus, who was the friend and colleague of Seneca, was the officer to whose custody St. Paul had been entrusted at Rome. Into the minute verbal criticism to which this question has given rise³ it is not necessary for me to enter. It has been shown that much of what was deemed Christian phraseology grew out of the pantheistic notion of one great body including, and one Divine mind animating and guiding, all existing things; and many other of the pretended coincidences are so slight as to be altogether worthless as an argument. Still, I think most persons who review what has been written on the subject will conclude that it is probable some fragments at least of Christian language had come to the ears of Seneca. But to suppose that his system of morals is in any degree formed after the model or under the influence of Christianity is to be blind to the most obvious characteristics of both Christianity and Stoicism; for no other moralist could be so aptly selected as representing their extreme divergence. Reverence and humility, a constant sense of the supreme majesty of God and of the weakness and sinfulness of man, and a perpetual reference to another world, were the essential characteristics of Christianity, the source of all its power, the basis of its distinctive type. Of all these, the teaching of Seneca is the direct antithesis. Careless of the future world, and profoundly convinced of the supreme majesty of man, he laboured to emancipate his disciples "from every fear of God and man"; and the proud language in which he claimed for the sage an equality with the gods represents, perhaps, the highest point to which philosophic arrogance has been carried. The Jews, with whom the Christians were then universally identified, he emphatically describes as "an accursed race."⁴ One man, indeed, there was

¹ Lact. *Inst. Div.* vii. 3.

² See their history fully investigated in Aubertin. Augustine followed Jerome in mentioning the letters, but neither of these writers asserted their genuineness. Lactantius, nearly at the same time (*Inst. Div.* vi. 24), distinctly spoke of Seneca as a Pagan, as Tertullian (*Apol.* 50) had done before. The immense number of forged documents is one of the most disgraceful features of the Church history of the first few centuries.

³ Fleury has written an elaborate work maintaining the connection between the apostle and the philosopher. Troplong (*Influence du Christianisme sur le Droit*) has adopted the same view. Aubertin, in the work I have already cited, has maintained the opposite view (which is that of all or nearly all English critics) with masterly skill and learning. The Abbé Dourif (*Rapports du Stoicisme et du Christianisme*) has placed side by side the passages from each writer which are most alike.

⁴ Quoted by St. Augustine. (*De Civ. Dei*, vi. 11.)

among the later Stoics who had almost realised the Christian type, and in whose pure and gentle nature the arrogance of his school can be scarcely traced; but Marcus Aurelius, who of all the pagan world, if we argued by internal evidence alone, would have been most readily identified with Christianity, was a persecutor of the faith, and he has left on record in his *Meditations* his contempt for the Christian martyrs.¹

The relation between the pagan philosophers and the Christian religion was a subject of much discussion and of profound difference of opinion in the early Church.² While the writers of one school apologised for the murder of Socrates, described the martyred Greek as the "buffoon of Athens,"³ and attributed his inspiration to diabolical influence;⁴ while they designated the writings of the philosophers as "the schools of heretics," and collected with a malicious assiduity all the calumnies that had been heaped upon their memory—there were others who made it a leading object to establish a close affinity between pagan philosophy and the Christian revelation. Imbued in many instances, almost from childhood, with the noble teaching of Plato, and keenly alive to the analogies between his philosophy and their new faith, these writers found the exhibition of this resemblance at once deeply grateful to themselves and the most successful way of dispelling the prejudices of their pagan neighbours. The success that had attended the Christian prophecies attributed to the Sibyls and the oracles, the passion for eclecticism, which the social and commercial position of Alexandria had generated, and also the example of the Jew Aristobulus, who had some time before contended that the Jewish writings had been translated into Greek, and had been the source of much of the pagan wisdom, encouraged them in their course. The most conciliatory, and at the same time the most philosophical school, was the earliest in the Church. Justin Martyr—the first of the Fathers whose writings possessed any general philosophical in-

terest—cordially recognises the excellence of many parts of the pagan philosophy, and even attributes it to a Divine inspiration, to the action of the generative or "seminal Logos," which from the earliest times had existed in the world, had inspired teachers like Socrates and Musonius, who had been persecuted by the dæmons, and had received in Christianity its final and perfect manifestation.⁵ The same generous and expansive appreciation may be traced in the writings of several later Fathers, although the school was speedily disfigured by some grotesque extravagances. Clement of Alexandria—a writer of wide sympathies, considerable originality, very extensive learning, but of a feeble and fantastic judgment—who immediately succeeded Justin Martyr, attributed all the wisdom of antiquity to two sources. The first source was tradition; for the angels, who had been fascinated by the antediluvian ladies, had endeavoured to ingratiate themselves with their fair companions by giving them an abstract of the metaphysical and other learning which was then current in heaven, and the substance of these conversations, being transmitted by tradition, supplied the pagan philosophers with their leading notions. The angels did not know everything, and therefore the Greek philosophy was imperfect; but this event formed the first great epoch in literary history. The second and most important source of pagan wisdom was the Old Testament,⁶ the influence of which many of the early Christians traced in every department of ancient wisdom. Plato had borrowed from it all his philosophy, Homer the noblest conceptions of his poetry, Demosthenes the finest touches of his eloquence. Even Miltiades owed his military skill to an assiduous study of the Pentateuch, and the ambushade by which he won the Battle of Marathon was imitated from the strategy of Moses.⁷

¹ See especially his *Apol.* ii. 8, 12, 13. He speaks of the *σπερματικός λόγος*.

² See, on all this, Clem. Alex. *Strom.* v., and also i. 22.

³ St. Clement repeats this twice (*Strom.* i. 24, v. 14). The writings of this Father are full of curious, and sometimes ingenious, attempts to trace different phrases of the great philosophers, orators, and poets to Moses. A vast amount of learning and ingenuity has been expended in the same cause by Eusebius. (*Præp. Evan.* xii. xiii.) The tradition of the derivation of pagan philosophy from the Old Testament found in general little favour among the Latin writers. There is some curious information on this subject in Waterland's "Charge to the Clergy of Middlesex, to prove that the wisdom of the ancients was borrowed from

¹ vi. 3.

² The history of the two schools has been elaborately traced by Ritter, Pressensé, and many other writers. I would especially refer to the fourth volume of Degérando's most fascinating *Histoire de la Philosophie*.

³ "Scurra Atticus," Min. Felix, *Octav.* This term is said by Cicero to have been given to Socrates by Zeno. (*Cic. De Nat. Deor.* i. 34.)

⁴ Tertull. *De Anima*, 39.

Pythagoras, moreover, had been himself a circumcised Jew.¹ Plato had been instructed in Egypt by the prophet Jeremiah. The god Serapis was no other than the patriarch Joseph, his Egyptian name being manifestly derived from his great-grandmother Sarah.²

Absurdities of this kind, of which I have given extreme, but by no means the only, examples, were usually primarily intended to repel arguments against Christianity, and they are illustrations of the tendency which has always existed in an uncritical age to invent, without a shadow of foundation, the most elaborate theories of explanation rather than recognise the smallest force in an objection. Thus, when the pagans attempted to reduce Christianity to a normal product of the human mind, by pointing to the very numerous pagan legends which were precisely parallel to the Jewish histories, it was answered that the dæmons were careful students of prophecy, that they foresaw with terror the advent of their Divine Conqueror, and that, in order to prevent men believing in him, they had invented, by anticipation, a series of legends resembling the events which were foretold.³ More frequently, however, the early Christians retorted the accusations of plagiarism, and by forged writings attributed to pagan authors, or by pointing out alleged traces of Jewish influence in genuine pagan writings, they endeavoured to trace through the past the footsteps of their faith. But this method of assimilation, which culminated in the Gnostics, the Neo-Platonists, and especially in Origen, was directed, not to the later Stoics of the Empire, but to the great philosophers who had preceded Christianity. It was in the writings of Plato, not in those of Epicurus or Marcus Aurelius, that the Fathers of the first three centuries found the influence of the Jewish Scriptures, and at the time when

the passion for discovering these connections was most extravagant, the notion of Seneca and his followers being inspired by the Christians was unknown.

Dismissing then, as altogether groundless, the notion that Christianity had obtained a complete or even a partial influence over the philosophic classes during the period of Stoical ascendancy, we come to the opinion of those who suppose that the Roman Empire was converted by a system of evidences—by the miraculous proofs of the divinity of Christianity, submitted to the adjudication of the people. To estimate this view aright, we have to consider both the capacity of the men of that age for judging miracles, and also—which is a different question—the extent to which such evidence would weigh upon their minds. To treat this subject satisfactorily it may be advisable to enter at some little length into the broad question of the evidence of the miraculous.

With the exception of a small minority of the priests of the Catholic Church, a general incredulity on the subject of miracles now underlies the opinions of almost all educated men. Nearly every one, however cordially he may admit some one particular class of miracles, as a general rule regards the accounts of such events, which are so frequent in all old historians, as false and incredible, even when he fully believes the natural events that are authenticated by the same testimony. The reason of this incredulity is not altogether the impossibility or even extreme natural improbability of miracles; for, whatever may be the case with some, there is at least one class or conception of them which is perfectly free from logical difficulty. There is no contradiction involved in the belief that spiritual beings, of power and wisdom immeasurably transcending our own, exist, or that, existing, they might, by the normal exercise of their powers, perform feats as far surpassing the understanding of the most gifted of mankind, as the electric telegraph and the prediction of an eclipse surpass the faculties of a savage. Nor does the incredulity arise, I think, as is commonly asserted, from the want of that amount and kind of evidence which in other departments is deemed sufficient. Very few of the minor facts of history are authenticated by as much evidence as the Stigmata of St. Francis, or the miracle of the holy thorn, or those which were said

revelation, delivered in 1731." It is in the 8th volume of Waterland's works (ed. 1737).

¹ St. Clement (*Strom.* i.) mentions that some think him to have been Ezekiel, an opinion which St. Clement himself does not hold. See, on the patristic notions about Pythagoras, Legendre, *Traité de l'Opinion*, tome i. p. 164.

² This was the opinion of Julius Firmicus Maternus, a Latin writer of the age of Constantine—"Nam quia Sarai pronepos fuerat Serapis dictus est Græco sermone, hoc est Σαπᾶς ἄνθρωπος" (Julius Firmicus Maternus, *De Erroribus Profanarum Religionum*, cap. xiv.).

³ Justin Martyr, *Apol.* i. 54; *Trypho.* 69-70. There is a very curious collection of pagan legends that were parallel to Jewish incidents in La Mothe le Vayer, *let xciu*.

to have been wrought at the tomb of the Abbé Paris. We believe, with tolerable assurance, a crowd of historical events on the testimony of one or two Roman historians; but when Tacitus and Suetonius describe how Vespasian restored a blind man to sight, and a cripple to strength,* their deliberate assertions do not even beget in our minds a suspicion that the narrative may possibly be true. We are quite certain that miracles were not ordinary occurrences in classical or mediæval times, but nearly all the contemporary writers from whom we derive our knowledge of those periods were convinced that they were.

If, then, I have correctly interpreted the opinions of ordinary educated people on this subject, it appears that the common attitude towards miracles is not that of doubt, of hesitation, of discontent with the existing evidence, but rather of absolute, derisive, and even unexamining incredulity. Such a fact, when we consider that the antecedent possibility of at least some miracles is usually admitted, and in the face of the vast mass of tradition that may be adduced in their favour, appears at first sight a striking anomaly, and the more so because it can be shown that the belief in miracles had in most cases not been reasoned down, but had simply faded away.

In order to ascertain the process by which this state of mind has been attained, we may take an example in a sphere which is happily removed from controversy. There are very few persons with whom the fictitious character of fairy tales has not ceased to be a question, or who would hesitate to disbelieve or even to ridicule any anecdote of this nature which was told them, without the very smallest examination of its evidence. Yet, if we ask in what respect the existence of fairies is naturally contradictory or absurd, it would be difficult to answer the question. A fairy is simply a being possessing a moderate share of human intelligence, with little or no moral

faculty, with a body pellucid, winged, and volatile, like that of an insect, with a passion for dancing; and, perhaps, with an extraordinary knowledge of the properties of different plants. That such beings should exist, or that, existing, they should be able to do many things beyond human power, are propositions which do not present the smallest difficulty. For many centuries their existence was almost universally believed. There is not a country, not a province, scarcely a parish, in which traditions of their appearance were not long preserved. So great a weight of tradition, so many independent trains of evidence attesting statements perfectly free from intrinsic absurdity, or even improbability, might appear sufficient, if not to establish conviction, at least to supply a very strong *prima facie* case, and ensure a patient and respectful investigation of the subject.

It has not done so, and the reason is sufficiently plain. The question of the credibility of fairy tales has not been resolved by an examination of evidence, but by an observation of the laws of historic development. Wherever we find an ignorant and rustic population, the belief in fairies is found to exist, and circumstantial accounts of their apparitions are circulated. But invariably with increased education this belief passes away. It is not that the fairy tales are refuted or explained away, or even narrowly scrutinised. It is that the fairies cease to appear. From the uniformity of this decline, we infer that fairy tales are the normal product of a certain condition of the imagination; and this position is raised to a moral certainty when we find that the decadence of fairy tales is but one of a long series of similar transformations.

When the savage looks around upon the world and begins to form his theories of existence, he falls at once into three great errors, which become the first principles of his subsequent opinions. He believes that this earth is the centre of the universe, and that all the bodies encircling it are intended for its use; that the disturbances and dislocations it presents, and especially the master curse of death, are connected with some event in his history, and also that the numerous phenomena and natural vicissitudes he sees around him are due to direct and isolated volitions, either of spirits presiding over, or of intelligences inherent in, matter.

* Suet. *Vesp.* 7; Tacit. *Hist.* iv. 81. There is a slight difference between the two historians about the second miracle. Suetonius says it was the leg, Tacitus that it was the hand, that was diseased. The god Serapis was said to have revealed to the patients that they would be cured by the emperor. Tacitus says that Vespasian did not believe in his own power: that it was only after much persuasion he was induced to try the experiment; that the blind man was well known in Alexandria, where the event occurred, and that eyewitnesses who had no motive to lie still attested the miracle.

Around these leading conceptions a crowd of particular legends speedily cluster. If a stone falls beside him, he naturally infers that someone has thrown it. If it be an aerolite, it is attributed to some celestial being. Believing that each comet, tempest, or pestilence results from a direct and isolated act, he proceeds to make theories regarding the motives that have induced his spiritual persecutors to assail him, and the methods by which he may assuage their anger. Finding numerous distinct trains or series of phenomena, he invents for each appropriate presiding spirits. Miracles are to him neither strange events nor violations of natural law, but simply the unveiling or manifestation of the ordinary government of the world.

With these broad intellectual conceptions several minor influences concur. A latent fetichism, which is betrayed in that love of direct personification, or of applying epithets derived from sentient beings to inanimate nature, which appears so largely in all poetry and eloquence, and especially in those of an early period of society, is the root of a great part of our opinions. If—to employ a very familiar illustration—the most civilised and rational of mankind will observe his own emotions, when by some accident he has struck his head violently against a door-post, he will probably find that his first exclamation was not merely of pain, but of anger, and of anger directed against the wood. In a moment reason checks the emotion; but if he observes carefully his own feelings, he may easily convince himself of the unconscious fetichism which is latent in his mind, and which, in the case of a child or a savage, displays itself without reserve. Man instinctively ascribes volition to whatever powerfully affects him. The feebleness of his imagination conspires with other causes to prevent an uncivilised man from rising above the conception of an anthropomorphic Deity, and the capricious or isolated acts of such a being form his exact notion of miracles. The same feebleness of imagination makes him clothe all intellectual tendencies, all conflicting emotions, all forces, passions, or fancies, in material forms. His mind naturally translates the conflict between opposing feelings into a history of the combat between rival spirits. A vast accumulation of myths is spontaneously formed—each legend being merely the material expression of

a moral fact. The simple love of the wonderful, and the complete absence of all critical spirit, aid the formation.

In this manner we find that in certain stages of society, and under the action of the influences I have stated, an accretion of miraculous legends is naturally formed around prominent personages or institutions. We look for them as we look for showers in April, or for harvest in autumn. We can very rarely show with any confidence the precise manner in which a particular legend is created or the nucleus of truth it contains, but we can analyse the general causes that have impelled men towards the miraculous; we can show that these causes have never failed to produce the effect, and we can trace the gradual alteration of mental conditions invariably accompanying the decline of the belief. When men are destitute of critical spirit, when the notion of uniform law is yet unborn, and when their imaginations are still incapable of rising to abstract ideas, histories of miracles are always formed and always believed, and they continue to flourish and to multiply until these conditions have altered. Miracles cease when men cease to believe and to expect them. In periods that are equally credulous, they multiply or diminish in proportion to the intensity with which the imagination is directed to theological topics. A comparison of the histories of the most different nations shows the mythical period to have been common to all; and we may trace in many quarters substantially the same miracles, though varied by national characteristics, and with a certain local cast and colouring. As among the Alps the same shower falls as rain in the sunny valleys, and as snow among the lofty peaks, so the same intellectual conceptions which in one moral latitude take the form of nymphs, or fairies, or sportive legends, appear in another as dæmons or appalling apparitions. Sometimes we can discover the precise natural fact which the superstition had misread. Thus, epilepsy, the phenomenon of nightmare, and that form of madness which leads men to imagine themselves transformed into some animal, are, doubtless, the explanation of many tales of demoniacal possession, of incubi, and of lycanthropy. In other cases we may detect a single error, such as the notion that the sky is close to the earth, or that the sun revolves around the globe, which had

suggested the legend. But more frequently we can give only a general explanation, enabling us to assign these legends to their place, as the normal expression of a certain stage of knowledge or intellectual power; and this explanation is their refutation. We do not say that they are impossible, or even that they are not authenticated by as much evidence as many facts we believe. We only say that, in certain conditions of society, illusions of the kind inevitably appear. No one can prove that there are no such things as ghosts; but if a man whose brain is reeling with fever declares that he has seen one, we have no great difficulty in forming an opinion about his assertion.

The gradual decadence of miraculous narratives which accompanies advancing civilisation may be chiefly traced to three causes. The first is that general accuracy of observation and of statement which all education tends more or less to produce, which checks the amplifications of the undisciplined imagination, and is speedily followed by a much stronger moral feeling on the subject of truth than ever exists in a rude civilisation. The second is an increased power of abstraction, which is likewise a result of general education, and which, by correcting the early habit of personifying all phenomena, destroys one of the most prolific sources of legends, and closes the mythical period of history. The third is the progress of physical science, which gradually dispels that conception of a universe governed by perpetual and arbitrary interference, from which, for the most part, these legends originally sprang. The whole history of physical science is one continued revelation of the reign of law. The same law that governs the motions of a grain of dust, or the light of the glowworm's lamp, is shown to preside over the march of the most majestic planet or the fire of the most distant sun. Countless phenomena, which were for centuries universally believed to be the results of spiritual agency, portents of calamity, or acts of Divine vengeance, have been one by one explained, have been shown to arise from blind physical causes, to be capable of prediction, or amenable to human remedies. Forms of madness which were for ages supposed to result from possession, are treated successfully in our hospitals. The advent of the comet is predicted. The wire invented by the sceptic Franklin

defends the crosses on our churches from the lightning stroke of heaven. Whether we examine the course of the planets or the world of the animalculæ; to whatever field of physical nature our research is turned, the uniform, invariable result of scientific enquiry is to show that even the most apparently irregular and surprising phenomena are governed by natural antecedents, and are parts of one great connected system. From this vast concurrence of evidence, from this uniformity of experience in so many spheres, there arises in the minds of scientific men a conviction, amounting to absolute moral certainty, that the whole course of physical nature is governed by law, that the notion of the perpetual interference of the Deity with some particular classes of its phenomena is false and unscientific, and that the theological habit of interpreting the catastrophes of nature as Divine warnings, or punishments, or disciplines, is a baseless and a pernicious superstition.

The effects of these discoveries upon miraculous legends are of various kinds. In the first place, a vast number which have clustered around the notion of the irregularity of some phenomenon which is proved to be regular—such as the innumerable accounts collected by the ancients to corroborate their opinion of the portentous nature of comets—are directly overthrown. In the next place, the revelation of the interdependence of phenomena greatly increases the improbability of some legends which it does not actually disprove. Thus, when men believed the sun to be simply a lamp revolving around and lighting our world, they had no great difficulty in believing that it was one day literally arrested in its course, to illuminate an army which was engaged in massacring its enemies; but the case became different when it was perceived that the sun was the centre of a vast system of worlds, which a suspension of the earth's motion must have reduced to chaos, without a miracle extending through it all. Thus, again, the old belief that some animals became for the first time carnivorous in consequence of the sin of Adam, appeared tolerably simple so long as this revolution was supposed to be only a change of habits or of tastes; but it became more difficult of belief when it was shown to involve a change of teeth; and the difficulty was, I suppose, still further aggravated when it was proved that, every animal having

digestive organs specially adapted to its food, these also must have been changed.

In the last place, physical science exercises a still wider influence by destroying what I have called the centre ideas out of which countless particular theories were evolved, of which they were the natural expression, and upon which their permanence depends. Proving that our world is not the centre of the universe, but is a simple planet, revolving with many others around a common sun; proving that the disturbances and sufferings of the world do not result from an event which occurred but 6,000 years ago; that long before that period the earth was dislocated by the most fearful convulsions; that countless generations of sentient animals, and also, as recent discoveries appear conclusively to show, of men, not only lived but died; proving, by an immense accumulation of evidence, that the notion of a universe governed by isolated acts of special intervention is untrue—physical science has given new directions to the currents of the imagination, supplied the judgment with new measures of probability, and thus affected the whole circle of our beliefs.

With most men, however, the transition is as yet but imperfectly accomplished, and that part of physical nature which science has hitherto failed to explain is regarded as a sphere of special interposition. Thus, multitudes who recognise the fact that the celestial phenomena are subject to inflexible law, imagine that the dispensation of rain is in some sense the result of arbitrary interpositions, determined by the conduct of mankind. Near the equator, it is true, it is tolerably constant and capable of prediction; but in proportion as we recede from the equator, the rainfall becomes more variable, and consequently, in the eyes of some, supernatural; and although no scientific man has the faintest doubt that it is governed by laws as inflexible as those which determine the motions of the planets, yet because, owing to the great complexity of the determining causes, we are unable fully to explain them, it is still customary to speak of "plagues of rain and water" sent on account of our sins, and of "scarcity and dearth, which we most justly suffer for our iniquity." Corresponding language is employed about the forms of disease and death which science has but imperfectly explained. If men are employed

in some profession which compels them to inhale steel filings or noxious vapours, or if they live in a pestilential marsh, the diseases that result from these conditions are not regarded as a judgment or a discipline, for the natural cause is obvious and decisive. But if the conditions that produced the disease are very subtle and very complicated; if physicians are incapable of tracing with certainty its nature or its effects; if, above all, it assumes the character of an epidemic, it is continually treated as a Divine judgment. The presumption against this view arises not only from the fact that, in exact proportion as medical science advances, diseases are proved to be the necessary consequence of physical conditions, but also from many characteristics of unexplained disease which unequivocally prove it to be natural. Thus, cholera, which is frequently treated according to the theological method, varies with the conditions of temperature, is engendered by particular forms of diet, follows the course of rivers, yields in some measure to medical treatment, can be aggravated or mitigated by courses of conduct that have no relation to vice or virtue, takes its victims indiscriminately from all grades of morals or opinion. Usually, when definite causes are assigned for a supposed judgment, they lead to consequences of the most grotesque absurdity. Thus, when a deadly and mysterious disease fell upon the cattle of England, some divines, not content with treating it as a judgment, proceeded to trace it to certain popular writings containing what were deemed heterodox opinions about the Pentateuch, or about the eternity of punishment. It may be true that the disease was imported from a country where such speculations are unknown; that the authors objected to had no cattle; that the farmers, who chiefly suffered by the disease, were for the most part absolutely unconscious of the existence of these books, and if they knew them would have indignantly repudiated them; that the town populations, who chiefly read them, were only affected indirectly by a rise in the price of food, which falls with perfect impartiality upon the orthodox and upon the heterodox; that particular counties were particular sufferers, without being at all conspicuous for their scepticism; that similar writings appeared in former periods, without cattle being in

any respect the worse; and that, at the very period at which the plague was raging, other countries, in which far more audacious speculations were rife, enjoyed an absolute immunity. In the face of all these consequences, the theory has been confidently urged and warmly applauded.

It is not, I think, sufficiently observed how large a proportion of such questions are capable of a strictly inductive method of discussion. If it is said that plagues or pestilences are sent as a punishment of error or of vice, the assertion must be tested by a comprehensive examination of the history of plagues on the one hand, and of periods of great vice and heterodoxy on the other. If it be said that an influence more powerful than any military agency directs the course of battles, the action of this force must be detected as we would detect electricity, or any other force, by experiment. If the attribute of infallibility be ascribed to a particular Church, an inductive reasoner will not be content with enquiring how far an infallible Church would be a desirable thing, or how far certain ancient words may be construed as a prediction of its appearance; he will examine, by a wide and careful survey of ecclesiastical history, whether this Church has actually been immutable and consistent in its teaching; whether it has never been affected by the ignorance or the passion of the age; whether its influence has uniformly been exerted on the side which proved to be true; whether it has never supported by its authority scientific views which were afterwards demonstrated to be false, or countenanced and consolidated popular errors, or thrown obstacles in the path of those who were afterwards recognised as the enlighteners of mankind. If ecclesiastical deliberations are said to be specially inspired or directed by an illuminating and supernatural power, we should examine whether the councils and convocations of clergymen exhibit a degree and harmony of wisdom that cannot reasonably be accounted for by the play of our unassisted faculties. If institutions are said to owe their growth to special supernatural agencies, distinct from the ordinary system of natural laws, we must examine whether their courses are so striking and so peculiar that natural laws fail to explain them. Whenever, as in the case of a battle, very many influences concur to

the result, it will frequently happen that that result will baffle our predictions. It will also happen that strange coincidences, such as the frequent recurrence of the same number in a game of chance, will occur. But there are limits to these variations from what we regard as probable. If, in throwing the dice, we uniformly attained the same number, or if in war the army which was most destitute of all military advantages was uniformly victorious, we should readily infer that some special cause was operating to produce the result. We must remember, too, that in every great historical crisis the prevalence of either side will bring with it a long train of consequences, and that we only see one side of the picture. If Hannibal, after his victory at Cannæ, had captured and burnt Rome, the vast series of results that have followed from the ascendancy of the Roman Empire would never have taken place, but the supremacy of a maritime, commercial, and comparatively pacific power would have produced an entirely different series, which would have formed the basis and been the essential condition of all the subsequent progress; a civilisation, the type and character of which it is now impossible to conjecture, would have arisen, and its theologians would probably have regarded the career of Hannibal as one of the most manifest instances of special interposition on record.

If we would form sound opinions on these matters, we must take a very wide and impartial survey of the phenomena of history. We must examine whether events have tended in a given direction with a uniformity or a persistence that is not naturally explicable. We must examine not only the facts that corroborate our theory, but also those which oppose it.

That such a method is not ordinarily adopted must be manifest to all. As Bacon said, men "mark the hits, but not the misses"; they collect industriously the examples in which many, and sometimes improbable, circumstances have converged to a result which they consider good, and they simply leave out of their consideration the circumstances that tend in the opposite direction. They expatiate with triumph upon the careers of emperors who have been the unconscious pioneers or agents in some great movement of human progress, but they do not dwell upon those whose genius was ex-

pended in a hopeless resistance, or upon those who, like Bajazet or Tamerlane, having inflicted incalculable evils upon mankind, passed away, leaving no enduring fruit behind them. A hundred missionaries start upon an enterprise, the success of which appears exceedingly improbable. Ninety-nine perish and are forgotten. One missionary succeeds, and his success is attributed to supernatural interference, because the probabilities were so greatly against him. It is observed that a long train of political or military events ensured the triumph of Protestantism in certain nations and periods. It is forgotten that another train of events destroyed the same faith in other lands, and paralysed the efforts of its noblest martyrs. We are told of showers of rain that followed public prayer; but we are not told how often prayers for rain proved abortive, or how much longer than usual the dry weather had already continued when they were offered.¹ As the old philosopher observed, the votive tablets of those who escaped are suspended in the temple, while those who were shipwrecked are forgotten.

Unfortunately, these inconsistencies do not arise simply from intellectual causes. A feeling which was intended to be religious, but which was in truth deeply the reverse, once led men to shrink from examining the causes of some of the more terrible of physical phenomena, because it was thought that these should be deemed special instances of Divine interference, and should, therefore, be regarded as too sacred for investigation.²

¹ The following is a good specimen of the language which may still be uttered, apparently without exciting any protest, from the pulpit in one of the great centres of English learning: "But we have prayed, and not been heard, at least in this present visitation. Have we deserved to be heard? In former visitations it was observed commonly how the cholera lessened from the day of the public humiliation. When we dreaded famine from long-continued drought, on the morning of our prayers the heaven over our head was of brass; the clear burning sky showed no token of change. Men looked with awe at its unmitigated clearness. In the evening was the cloud like a man's hand; the relief was come." And then the author adds, in a note: "This describes what I myself saw on the Sunday morning in Oxford, on returning from the early communion at St. Mary's at eight. There was no visible change till the evening." (*Pusey's Miracles of Prayer*, preached at Oxford, 1866.)

² E.g., "A master of philosophy, travelling with others on the way, when a fearful thunderstorm arose, checked the fear of his fellows, and discoursed to them of the natural reasons of that uproar in the clouds, and those sudden flashes wherewith they seemed (out of the ignorance of causes) to be too much affrighted: in the midst of his philosophical discourse he was struck dead with the dreadful eruption which he slighted. What could this be but the finger of that God who will have

In the world of physical science this mode of thought has almost vanished, but a corresponding sentiment may be often detected in the common judgments of history. Very many well-meaning men—censuring the pursuit of truth in the name of the God of Truth—while they regard it as commendable and religious to collect facts illustrating or corroborating the theological theory of life, consider it irreverent and wrong to apply to those facts, and to that theory, the ordinary severity of inductive reasoning.

What I have written is not in any degree inconsistent with the belief that, by the dispensation of Providence, moral causes have a natural and often overwhelming influence upon happiness and upon success, nor yet with the belief that our moral nature enters into a very real, constant, and immediate contact with a higher power. Nor does it at all disprove the possibility of Divine interference with the order even of physical nature. A world governed by special acts of intervention, such as that which mediæval theologians imagined, is perfectly conceivable, though it is probable that most impartial enquirers will convince themselves that this is not the system of the planet we inhabit; and if any instance of such interference be sufficiently attested, it should not be rejected as intrinsically impossible. It is, however, the fundamental error of most writers on miracles, that they confine their attention to two points—the possibility of the fact, and the nature of the evidence. There is a third element, which in these questions is of capital importance: the predisposition of men in certain stages of society towards the miraculous, which is so strong that miraculous stories are then invariably circulated and credited, and which makes an amount of evidence that would be quite sufficient to establish a natural fact, altogether inadequate to establish a supernatural one. The positions for which I have been contending are that a perpetual interference of the Deity with the natural course of events is the earliest and simplest notion of miracles, and that this notion, which is implied in so many systems of belief, arose in part from an ignorance of the laws of nature, and in part also from an incapacity

his works rather entertained with wonder and trembling than with curious scanning?" (Bishop Hall, *The Invisible World*, § vi.)

for inductive reasoning, which led men merely to collect facts coinciding with their preconceived opinions, without attending to those that were inconsistent with them. By this method there is no superstition that could not be defended. Volumes have been written giving perfectly authentic histories of wars, famines, and pestilences that followed the appearance of comets. There is not an omen, not a prognostic, however childish, that has not, in the infinite variety of events, been occasionally verified; and to minds that are under the influence of a superstitious imagination these occasional verifications more than outweigh all the instances of error. Simple knowledge is wholly insufficient to correct the disease. No one is so firmly convinced of the reality of lucky and unlucky days, and of supernatural portents, as the sailor, who has spent his life in watching the deep, and has learnt to read with almost unerring skill the promise of the clouds. No one is more persuaded of the superstitions about fortune than the habitual gambler. Sooner than abandon his theory, there is no extravagance of hypothesis to which the superstitious man will not resort. The ancients were convinced that dreams were usually supernatural. If the dream was verified, this was plainly a prophecy. If the event was the exact opposite of what the dream foreshadowed, the latter was still supernatural, for it was a recognised principle that dreams should sometimes be interpreted by contraries. If the dream bore no relation to subsequent events, unless it were transformed into a fantastic allegory, it was still supernatural, for allegory was one of the most ordinary forms of revelation. If no ingenuity of interpretation could find a prophetic meaning in a dream, its supernatural character was even then not necessarily destroyed; for Homer said there was a special portal through which deceptive visions passed into the mind, and the Fathers declared that it was one of the occupations of the dæmons to perplex and bewilder us with unmeaning dreams.

To estimate aright the force of the predisposition to the miraculous should be one of the first tasks of the enquirer into its reality; and no one, I think, can examine the subject with impartiality without arriving at the conclusion that in many periods of history it has been so strong as to accumulate around pure

delusions an amount of evidence far greater than would be sufficient to establish even improbable natural facts. Through the entire duration of pagan Rome, it was regarded as an unquestionable truth, established by the most ample experience, that prodigies of various kinds announced every memorable event, and that sacrifices had the power of mitigating or arresting calamity. In the Republic, the Senate itself officially verified and explained the prodigies.¹ In the Empire there is not an historian, from Tacitus down to the meanest writer in the Augustan history, who was not convinced that numerous prodigies foreshadowed the accession and death of every sovereign, and every great catastrophe that fell upon the people. Cicero could say with truth that there was not a single nation of antiquity, from the polished Greek to the rudest savage, which did not admit the existence of a real art enabling men to foretell the future, and that the splendid temples of the oracles, which for so many centuries commanded the reverence of mankind, sufficiently attested the intensity of the belief.² The reality of the witch miracles was established by a critical tribunal, which, however imperfect, was at least the most searching then existing in the world, by the judicial decisions of the law courts of every European country, supported by the unanimous voice of public opinion, and corroborated by the investigation of some of the ablest men during several centuries. The belief that the King's touch can cure scrofula flourished in the most brilliant periods of English history.³ It was unshaken by the most

¹ Sir C. Lewis, *On the Credibility of Roman Hist.* vol. i, p. 50.

² Cic. *De Divin.* lib. i c. 1.

³ "The days on which the miracle [of the king's touch] was to be wrought were fixed at sittings of the Privy Council, and were solemnly notified by the clergy to all the parish churches of the realm. When the appointed time came, several divines in full canonicals stood round the canopy of state. The surgeon of the royal household introduced the sick. A passage of Mark xvi. was read. When the words 'They shall lay their hands on the sick, and they shall recover,' had been pronounced, there was a pause, and one of the sick was brought to the king. His Majesty stroked the ulcers. Then came the Epistle, etc. The Service may still be found in the Prayer Books of the reign of Anne. Indeed, it was not until some time after the accession of George I. that the University of Oxford ceased to reprint the office of healing, together with the Liturgy. Theologians of eminent learning, ability, and virtue gave the sanction of their authority to this mummery, and, what is stranger still, medical men of high note believed, or affected to believe, it. Charles II. in the course of his reign, touched near 100,000 persons. In 1682 he performed the rite 8,500 times. In 1684 the

numerous and public experiments. It was asserted by the Privy Council, by the bishops of two religions, by the general voice of the clergy in the palmiest days of the English Church, by the University of Oxford, and by the enthusiastic assent of the people. It survived the ages of the Reformation, of Bacon, of Milton, and of Hobbes. It was by no means extinct in the age of Locke, and would probably have lasted still longer, had not the change of dynasty at the Revolution assisted the tardy scepticism.¹ Yet there is now scarcely an educated man who will defend these miracles. Considered abstractedly, indeed, it is perfectly conceivable that Providence might have announced coming events by prodigies, or imparted to someone a miraculous power, or permitted evil spirits to exist among mankind and assist them in their enterprises. The evidence establishing these miracles is cumulative, and it is immeasurably greater than the evidence of many natural facts, such as the earthquakes at Antioch, which no one would dream of questioning. We disbelieve the

miracles, because an overwhelming experience proves that in certain intellectual conditions, and under the influence of certain errors which we are enabled to trace, superstitions of this order invariably appear and flourish, and that, when these intellectual conditions have passed, the prodigies as invariably cease, and the whole fabric of superstition melts silently away.

It is extremely difficult for an ordinary man, who is little conversant with the writings of the past, and who unconsciously transfers to other ages the critical spirit of his own, to realise the fact that histories of the most grotesquely extravagant nature could, during the space of many centuries, be continually propounded without either provoking the smallest question or possessing the smallest truth. We may, however, understand something of this credulity when we remember the diversion of the ancient mind from physical science to speculative philosophy; the want of the many checks upon error which printing affords; the complete absence of that habit of cautious, experimental research which Bacon and his contemporaries infused into modern philosophy; and, in Christian times, the theological notion that the spirit of belief is a virtue, and the spirit of scepticism a sin. We must remember, too, that before men had found the key to the motions of the heavenly bodies—before the false theory of the vortices and the true theory of gravitation—when the multitude of apparently capricious phenomena was very great, the notion that the world was governed by distinct and isolated influences was that which appeared most probable even to the most rational intellect. In such a condition of knowledge—which was that of the most enlightened days of the Roman Empire—the hypothesis of universal law was justly regarded as a rash and premature generalisation. Every enquirer was confronted with innumerable phenomena that were deemed plainly miraculous. When Lucretius sought to banish the supernatural from the universe he was compelled to employ much ingenuity in endeavouring to explain, by a natural law, why a miraculous fountain near the temple of Jupiter Ammon was hot by night and cold by day, and why the temperature of wells was higher in winter than in summer.²

throng was such that six or seven of the sick were trampled to death. James, in one of his progresses, touched 800 persons in the choir of the cathedral of Chester." (Macaulay's *History of England*, c. xiv.)

¹ One of the surgeons of Charles II. named John Brown, whose official duty it was to superintend the ceremony, and who assures us that he has witnessed many thousands touched, has written an extremely curious account of it, called *Charisma Basilicon* (London, 1683). This miraculous power existed exclusively in the English and French royal families, being derived, in the first, from Edward the Confessor, in the second from St. Louis. A surgeon attested the reality of the disease before the miracle was performed. The king hung a riband with a gold coin round the neck of the person touched; but Brown thinks the gold, though possessing great virtue, was not essential to the cure. He had known cases where the cured person had sold, or ceased to wear, the medal, and his disease returned. The gift was unimpaired by the Reformation, and an obdurate Catholic was converted on finding that Elizabeth, after the Pope's excommunication, could cure his scrofula. Francis I. cured many persons when prisoner in Spain. Charles I., when a prisoner, cured a man by his simple benediction, the Puritans not permitting him to touch him. His blood had the same efficacy, and Charles II., when an exile in the Netherlands, still retained it. There were, however, some "Atheists, Sadducees, and ill-conditioned Pharisees" who even then disbelieved it; and Brown gives the letter of one who went, a complete sceptic, to satisfy his friends, and came away cured and converted. It was popularly, but Brown says erroneously, believed that the touch was peculiarly efficacious on Good Friday. An official register was kept, for every month in the reign of Charles II., of the persons touched, but two years and a-half appear to be wanting. The smallest number touched in one year was 2,983 (in 1669), the total, in the whole reign, 92,107. Brown gives numbers of specific cases with great detail. Shakespeare has noticed the power (*Macbeth*, Act iv. Scene 3). Dr. Johnson, when a boy, was touched by Queen Anne; but at that time few persons except Jacobites, believed the miracle.

² Lucretius, lib. vi. The poet says there are certain

Eclipses were supposed by the populace to foreshadow calamity; but the Roman soldiers believed that by beating drums and cymbals they could cause the moon's disc to regain its brightness.¹ In obedience to dreams, the great Emperor Augustus went begging money through the streets of Rome,² and the historian who records the act himself wrote to Pliny entreating the postponement of a trial.³ The stroke of the lightning was an augury,⁴ and its menace was directed especially against the great, who covered in abject terror during a thunderstorm. Augustus used to guard himself against thunder by wearing the skin of a sea-calf.⁵ Tiberius, who professed to be a complete freethinker, had greater faith in laurel leaves.⁶ Caligula was accustomed during a thunderstorm to creep beneath his bed.⁷ During the games in honour of Julius Cæsar, a comet appearing for seven days in the sky, the people believed it to be the soul of the dead,⁸ and a temple was erected in its honour.⁹

seeds of fire in the earth, around the water, which the sun attracts to itself, but which the cold of the night represses, and forces back upon the water.

The fountain of Jupiter Ammon, and many others that were deemed miraculous, are noticed by Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* ii. 106)

"Fly not yet; the fount that played
In times of old through Ammon's shade,
Though icy cold by day it ran,
Yet still, like souls of mirth, began
To burn when night was near

—Moore's *Melodies*

¹ Tacit. *Annal.* i. 28 Long afterwards, the people of Turin were accustomed to greet every eclipse with loud cries, and St. Maximus of Turin energetically combated their superstition. (Ceillier, *Hist. des Auteurs sacrés*, tome iv. p. 607)

² Suet. *Aug.* xci

³ See the answer of the younger Pliny (*Ep.* i. 18), suggesting that dreams should often be interpreted by contraries. A great many instances of dreams that were believed to have been verified are given in Cic. (*De Divinatione*, lib. i.) and Valerius Maximus (lib. i. c. vii.) Marcus Aurelius (Capitolinus) was said to have appeared to many persons after his death in dreams, and predicted the future

⁴ The augurs had noted eleven kinds of lightning with different significations (Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* ii. 53) Pliny says all nations agree in clapping their hands when it lightens (xxviii. 5) Cicero very shrewdly remarked that the Roman considered lightning a good omen when it shone upon his left, while the Greeks and barbarians believed it to be auspicious when it was upon the right (Cic. *De Divinatione*, ii. 39) When Constantine prohibited all other forms of magic, he especially authorised that which was intended to avert hail and lightning (*Cod. Theod.* lib. ix. tit. xvi. l. 3)

⁵ Suet. *Aug.* xc.

⁶ *Ibid.* Tiber. lxxix The virtue of laurel leaves, and of the skin of a sea-calf, as preservatives against lightning, are noticed by Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* ii. 56), who also says (xv. 40) that the laurel leaf is believed to have a natural antipathy to fire, which it shows by its angry cracking when in contact with that element

⁷ Suet. *Calig.* ii

⁸ Suet. *Jul. Cæs.* lxxxviii.

⁹ Plin. *Hist. Nat.* ii. 23.

Sometimes we find this credulity broken by curious inconsistencies of belief, or semi-rationalistic explanations. Livy, who relates with perfect faith innumerable prodigies, has observed, nevertheless, that the more prodigies are believed the more they are announced.¹ Those who admitted most fully the reality of the oracles occasionally represented them as natural, contending that a prophetic faculty was innate in all men, though dormant in most; that it might be quickened into action by sleep, by a pure and ascetic life, or in the prostration that precedes death, or in the delirium produced by certain vapours; and that the gradual enfeebling of the last was the cause of the cessation of the oracles.² Earthquakes were believed to result from supernatural interpositions, and to call for expiatory sacrifices, but at the same time they had direct natural antecedents.

¹ "Prodigia eo anno multa nuntiata sunt, quæ quo magis credebant simplices ac religiosi homines eo plura nuntiabantur" (xxiv. 10) Compare with this the remark of Cicero on the oracles. "Quando autem illa vis evanuit? An postquam homines minus creduli esse cœperunt?" (*De Div.* ii. 57)

² This theory, which is developed at length by the Stoic, in the first book of the *De Divinatione* of Cicero, grew out of the pantheistic notion that the human soul is a part of the Deity, and therefore by nature a participator in the Divine attribute of prescience. The soul, however, was crushed by the weight of the body; and there were two ways of evoking its prescience—the ascetic way, which attenuates the body, and the magical way, which stimulates the soul. Apollonius declared that his power of prophecy was not due to magic, but solely to his abstinence from animal food. (Philost. *Ap. of Tyana*, viii. 5) Among those who believed the oracles there were two theories. The first was that they were inspired by demons or spirits of a degree lower than the gods. The second was that they were due to the action of certain vapours which emanated from the caverns beneath the temples, and which, by throwing the priestess into a state of delirium, evoked her prophetic powers. The first theory was that of the Platonists, and it was adopted by the Christians, who, however, changed the signification of the word *dæmon*. The second theory, which appears to be due to Aristotle (Baltus, *Réponse à l'Histoire des Oracles*, p. 132), is noticed by Cic. *De Div.* i. 19; Plin. *H. N.* ii. 95; and others. It is closely allied to the modern belief in clairvoyance. Plutarch, in his treatise on the decline of the oracles, attributes that decline sometimes to the death of the demons (who were believed to be mortal), and sometimes to the exhaustion of the vapours. The oracles themselves, according to Porphyry (Fontenelle, *Hist. des Oracles*, pp. 220-222, first ed.), attributed it to the second cause. Iamblichus (*De Myst.* § iii. c. xi.) combines both theories, and both are very clearly stated in the following curious passage: "Quamquam Platonii credam inter deos atque homines, natura et loco medias quasdam divorum potestates interitas, casque divinationes cunctas et magorum miracula gubernare. Quin et illud mecum reputo, posse animum humanum, præsertim, puerilem et simplicem, seu carminum avocamento, sive odorum delinimento, soporari, et ad oblivionem præsentium externarum, et paulisper remota corporis memoria, redigi ac redire ad naturam suam, quæ est immortalis scilicet et divina; atque ita veluti quodam sopore, futura rerum præagere." (Apuleius, *Apology*.)

The Greeks believed that they were caused by subterranean waters, and they accordingly sacrificed to Poseidon. The Romans were uncertain as to their physical antecedents, and therefore inscribed no name on the altar of expiation.¹ Pythagoras is said to have attributed them to the strugglings of the dead.² Pliny, after a long discussion, decided that they were produced by air forcing itself through fissures of the earth, but he immediately proceeds to assert that they are invariably the precursors of calamity.³ The same writer, having recounted the triumph of astronomers in predicting and explaining eclipses, bursts into an eloquent apostrophe to those great men who had thus reclaimed man from the dominion of superstition, and in high and enthusiastic terms urges them to pursue still further their labour in breaking the thralldom of ignorance.⁴ A few chapters later he professes his unhesitating belief in the ominous character of comets.⁵ The notions, too, of magic and astrology were detached from all theological belief, and might be found among many who were absolute atheists.⁶

These few examples will be sufficient to show how fully the Roman soil was prepared for the reception of miraculous histories, even after the writings of Cicero and Seneca, in the brilliant days of Augustus and the Antonines. The feebleness of the uncultivated mind, which cannot rise above material conceptions, had indeed passed away, the legends of the popular theology had lost all power over the educated, but at the same time an absolute ignorance of physical science and of inductive reasoning remained. The facility of belief that was manifested by some of the most eminent men, even on matters that were not deemed supernatural, can only be realised by those who have an intimate acquaintance with their works. Thus, to give but a few examples, that great naturalist whom I have so often cited tells us with the utmost gravity how the fiercest lion

trembles at the crowing of a cock,¹ how elephants celebrate their religious ceremonies;² how the stag draws serpents by its breath from their holes, and then tramples them to death;³ how the salamander is so deadly that the food cooked in water, or the fruit grown on trees it has touched, are fatal to man;⁴ how, when a ship is flying before so fierce a tempest that no anchors or chains can hold it, if only the remora or echinus fastens on its keel, it is arrested in its course, and remains motionless and rooted among the waves.⁵ On matters that would appear the most easily verified he was equally confident. Thus, the human saliva, he assures us, has many mysterious properties. If a man, especially when fasting, spits into the throat of a serpent, it is said that the animal speedily dies.⁶ It is certain that to anoint the eyes with spittle is a sovereign remedy against ophthalmia.⁷ If a pugilist, having struck his adversary, spits into his own hand, the pain he caused instantly ceases. If he spits into his hand before striking, the blow is the more severe.⁸ Aristotle, the greatest naturalist of Greece, had observed that it was a curious fact that on the sea-shore no animal ever dies except during the ebbing of the tide. Several centuries later Pliny, the greatest naturalist of an empire that was washed by many tidal seas, directed his attention to this statement. He declared that, after careful observations which had been made in Gaul, it had been found to be inaccurate, for what Aristotle stated of all animals was in fact only true of man.⁹ It was in 1727 and the two following years that scientific observations made at Rochefort and at Brest finally dissipated the delusion.¹⁰

Volumes might be filled with illustrations of how readily, in the most enlightened days of the Roman Empire, strange, and especially miraculous, tales were believed, even under circumstances

¹ Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* viii. 19. This is also mentioned by Lucretius. ² viii. 1.

³ vi. 1. 50. This was one of the reasons why the early Christians sometimes adopted the stag as a symbol of Christ.

⁴ lxxix. 23.

⁵ xxxii. 1.

⁶ vii. 2.

⁷ xxviii. 7. The blind man restored to sight by Vespasian was cured by anointing his eyes with spittle. (Suet. *Vesp.* 7; Tacit. *Hist.* iv. 81.)

⁸ *Ibid.* The custom of spitting in the hand before striking still exists among pugilists.

⁹ ii. 101.

¹⁰ Legendre, *Traité de l'Opinion*, tome ii p. 17. The superstition is, however, said still to linger in many sea-coast towns.

¹ Aul. Gell. *Noct.* ii. 28. Florus, however (*Hist.* l. 19), mentions a Roman general appeasing the goddess Earth on the occasion of an earthquake that occurred during a battle.

² *Idem*, *Hist. Var.* iv. 17.

³ *Hist. Nat.* ii. 81-86.

⁴ *Ibid.* ii. 9.

⁵ *Ibid.* ii. 23.

⁶ I have referred in the last chapter to a striking passage of Am. Marcellinus on this combination. The reader may find some curious instances of the superstitions of Roman sceptics in Champagny, *Les Antonins*, tome iii. p. 46.

that would appear to give every facility for the detection of the imposture. In the field of the supernatural, however, it should be remembered that a movement, which I have traced in the last chapter, had produced a very exceptional amount of credulity during the century and a half that preceded the conversion of Constantine. Neither the writings of Cicero and Seneca, nor even those of Pliny and Plutarch, can be regarded as fair samples of the belief of the educated. The Epicurean philosophy which rejected, the Academic philosophy which doubted, and the Stoic philosophy which simplified and sublimated superstition, had alike disappeared. The *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius closed the period of Stoical influence, and the *Dialogues* of Lucian were the last solitary protest of expiring scepticism.¹ The aim of the philosophy of Cicero had been to ascertain truth by the free exercise of the critical powers. The aim of the Pythagorean philosophy was to attain the state of ecstasy, and to purify the mind by religious rites. Every philosopher soon plunged into magical practices, and was encircled, in the eyes of his disciples, with a halo of legend. Apollonius of Tyana, whom the pagans opposed to Christ, had raised the dead, healed the sick, cast out devils, freed a young man from a lamia or vampire with whom he was enamoured, prophesied, seen in one country events that were occurring in another, and filled the world with the fame of his miracles and of his sanctity.² A similar power, notwith-

standing his own disclaimer, was popularly attributed to the Platonist Apuleius.³ Lucian has left us a detailed account of the impostures by which the philosopher Alexander endeavoured to acquire the fame of a miracle-worker.⁴ When a magician plotted against Plotinus his spells recoiled miraculously against himself; and when an Egyptian priest endeavoured by incantations to evoke the guardian dæmon of the philosopher, instead of a dæmon the temple of Isis was irradiated by the presence of a god.⁵ Porphyry was said to have expelled an evil dæmon from a bath.⁶ It was reported among his disciples that when Iamblichus prayed he was raised (like the saints of another creed) ten cubits from the ground, and that his body and his dress assumed a golden hue.⁷ It was well known that he had at Gadara drawn forth from the waters of two fountains their guardian spirits, and exhibited them in bodily form to his disciples.⁸ A woman named Sospitira had been visited by two spirits under the form of aged Chaldeans, and had been endowed with a transcendent beauty and with a superhuman knowledge. Raised above all human frailties, save only love and death, she was able to see at once the deeds which were done in every land, and the people, dazzled by her beauty and her wisdom, ascribed to her a share of the omnipresence of the Deity.⁹

tion to his French translation of the work of Philostratus.

¹ See his defence against the charge of magic. Apuleius, who was at once a brilliant rhetorician, the writer of an extremely curious novel (*The Metamorphoses, or Golden Ass*), and of many other works, and an indefatigable student of the religious mysteries of his time, lived through the reigns of Hadrian and his two successors. After his death his fame was for about a century apparently eclipsed; and it has been noticed as very remarkable that Tertullian, who lived a generation after Apuleius, and who, like him, was a Carthaginian, has never even mentioned him. During the fourth century his reputation revived, and Lactantius, St. Jerome, and St. Augustine relate that many miracles were attributed to him, and that he was placed by the pagans on a level with Christ, and regarded by some as even a greater magician. See the sketch of his life by M. Bétolaud prefixed to the Panckoucke edition of his works.

² *Life of Alexander*. There is an extremely curious picture of the religious jugglers who were wandering about the Empire, in the eighth and ninth books of the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius. See, too, Juvenal, *Sat.* vi. 510-585.

³ Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*.

⁴ Eunapius, *Porphy.*

⁵ *Ibid.* *Iamb.* Iamblichus himself only laughed at the report.

⁶ Eunapius, *Iamb.*

⁷ See her life in Eunapius, *Edesius*. Ælian and the rhetorician Aristides are also full of the wildest prodigies. There is an interesting dissertation on this subject in Friedländer (Trad. Franc. tome iv. pp. 177-186).

¹ Lucian is believed to have died about two years before Marcus Aurelius.

² See his very curious *Life* by Philostratus. This *Life* was written at the request of Julia Domna, the wife of Septimius Severus, whether or not with the intention of opposing the Gospel narrative is a question still fiercely discussed. Among the most recent Church historians, Pressensé maintains the affirmative, and Neander the negative. Apollonius was born at nearly the same time as Christ, but outlived Domitian. The traces of his influence are widely spread through the literature of the Empire. Eunapius calls him "Ἀπολλώνιος ὁ ἐκ Τυάνων, οὐκέτι φιλόσοφος ἀλλ' ἦν τι θεῶν τε καὶ ἀνθρώπου μέσον." (*Lives of the Sophists*) Xiphilin relates (lxvii. 18) the story, told also by Philostratus, how Apollonius, being at Ephesus, saw the assassination of Domitian at Rome. Alexander Severus placed (*Lampridius Severus*) the statue of Apollonius with those of Orpheus, Abraham, and Christ, for worship in his oratory. Aurelian was reported to have been diverted from his intention of destroying Tyana by the ghost of the philosopher, who appeared in his tent, rebuked him, and saved the city (*Vopiscus, Aurelian*); and, lastly, the pagan philosopher Hierocles wrote a book opposing Apollonius to Christ, which was answered by Eusebius. The Fathers of the fourth century always spoke of him as a great magician. Some curious passages on the subject are collected by M. Chassignat, in the introduc-

Christianity floated into the Roman Empire on the wave of credulity that brought with it this long train of Oriental superstitions and legends. In its moral aspect it was broadly distinguished from the systems around it, but its miracles were accepted by both friend and foe as the ordinary accompaniments of religious teaching. The Jews, in the eyes of the pagans, had long been proverbial for their credulity,¹ and the Christians inherited a double measure of their reputation. Nor is it possible to deny that in the matter of the miraculous the reputation was deserved. Among the pagans the theory of Euhemerus, who believed the gods to be but deified men, had been the stronghold of the sceptics, while the Platonic notion of dæmons was adopted by the more believing philosophers. The Christian teachers combined both theories, maintaining that deceased kings had originally supplied the names of deities, but that malevolent dæmons had taken their places; and without a single exception the Fathers maintained the reality of the pagan miracles as fully as their own.² The oracles, as we have seen, had been ridiculed and rejected by numbers of the philosophers, but the Christians unanimously admitted their reality. They appealed to a long series of oracles as predictions of their faith; and there is, I believe, no example of the denial of their supernatural character in the Christian Church till 1696, when a Dutch Anabaptist minister named Van Dale, in a remarkable book, which was abridged and translated by Fontenelle, asserted, in opposition to the unanimous voice of ecclesiastical authority, that they were simple impostures—a theory which is now almost universally accepted. To suppose that men who held these opinions were capable, in the second or third cen-

turies, of ascertaining with any degree of just confidence whether miracles had taken place in Judæa in the first century, is grossly absurd; nor would the conviction of their reality have made any great impression on their minds at a time when miracles were supposed to be so abundantly diffused.

In truth, the question of the reality of the Jewish miracles must be carefully distinguished from that of the conversion of the Roman Empire. With the light that is furnished to us by modern investigations and habits of thought, we weigh the testimony of the Jewish writers; but most of the more judicious of modern apologists, considering the extreme credulity of the Jewish people, decline to make the question simply one of evidence, and occupy themselves chiefly in endeavouring to show that miracles are possible, that those recorded in the Biblical narratives are related in such a manner, and are so interwoven with the texture of a simple and artless narrative, as to carry with them an internal proof of their reality; that they differ in kind from later miracles, and especially that the character and destinies of Christianity are such as to render its miraculous origin antecedently probable. But in the ages when the Roman Empire was chiefly converted, all sound and discriminating historical investigation of the evidence of the early miracles was impossible, nor was any large use made of those miracles as proofs of the religion. The rhetorician Arnobius is probably the only one of the early apologists who gives, among the evidences of the faith, any prominent place to the miracles of Christ.³ When evidential reasoning was employed, it was usually an appeal not to miracles, but to prophecy. But here again the opinions of the patristic age must be pronounced absolutely worthless. To prove that events had taken place in Judæa, accurately corresponding with the prophecies, or that the prophecies were themselves genuine, were both tasks far transcending the critical powers of the Roman converts. The wild extravagance of fantastic allegory, commonly connected with Origen, but which appears at a much earlier date in the writings of Justin Martyr and Irenæus, had thrown the interpretation of prophecy into hope-

¹ "Credat Judæus Apella" (Hor. Sat. v. 100)

² This appears from all the writings of the Fathers. There were, however, two forms of Pagan miracles about which there was some hesitation in the early Church—the beneficent miracle of healing and the miracle of prophecy. Concerning the first, the common opinion was that the dæmons only cured diseases they had themselves caused, or that at least, if they ever (in order to enthrall men more effectually) cured purely natural diseases, they did it by natural means, which their superior knowledge and power placed at their disposal. Concerning prophecy, it was the opinion of some of the Fathers that intuitive prescience was a Divine prerogative, and that the prescience of the dæmons was only acquired by observation. Their immense knowledge enabled them to forecast events to a degree far transcending human faculties, and they employed this power in the oracles.

³ *De Origine ac Progressu Idolatriæ* (Amsterdam).

³ This characteristic of early Christian apology is forcibly exhibited by Pressensé, *Hist. des trois premiers Siècles*, 2me série, tome II.

less confusion, while the deliberate and apparently perfectly unscrupulous forgery of a whole literature, destined to further the propagation either of Christianity as a whole or of some particular class of tenets that had arisen within its border,¹ made criticism at once pre-eminently difficult and necessary. A long series of oracles were cited, predicting in detail the sufferings of Christ. The prophecies forged by the Christians, and attributed by them to the heathen Sibyls, were accepted as genuine by the entire Church, and were continually appealed to as among the most powerful evidences of the faith. Justin Martyr declared that it was by the instigation of dæmons that it had been made a capital offence to read them.² Clement of Alexandria preserved the tradition that St. Paul had urged the brethren to study them.³ Celsus designated the Christians Sibyllists, on account of the pertinacity with which they insisted upon them.⁴ Constantine the Great adduced them in a solemn speech before the Council of Nice.⁵ St. Augustine notices that the Greek word for a fish, which, containing the initial letters of the name and titles of Christ, had been adopted by the early Church as its sacred symbol, contains also the initial letters of some prophetic lines ascribed to the Sibyl of Erythra.⁶ The pagans, it is true, accused their opponents of having forged or interpolated these prophecies,⁷ but there was not a single Christian writer of the patristic period who disputed their authority, and there were very few even of the most illustrious who did not appeal to them. Unanimously admitted by the Church of the Fathers, they were unanimously admitted during the Middle Ages, and an allusion to them passed into the most beautiful lyric of the Missal. It was only at the period of the Reformation that the great but unhappy Castellio pointed out many passages in them which could not possibly be genuine. He was followed, in the first years of the

seventeenth century, by a Jesuit named Possevin, who observed that the Sibyls were known to have lived at a later period than Moses, and that many passages in the Sibylline books purported to have been written before Moses. Those passages, therefore, he said, were interpolated; and he added, with a characteristic sagacity, that they had doubtless been inserted by Satan, for the purpose of throwing suspicion upon the books.⁸ It was in 1649 that a French Protestant minister, named Blondel, ventured for the first time in the Christian Church to denounce these writings as deliberate and clumsy forgeries, and after much angry controversy his sentiment has acquired an almost undisputed ascendancy in criticism.

But although the opinion of the Roman converts was extremely worthless when dealing with past history or with literary criticism, there was one branch of miracles concerning which their position was somewhat different. Contemporary miracles, often of the most extraordinary character, but usually of the nature of visions, exorcisms, or healing the sick, were from the time of Justin Martyr uniformly represented by the Fathers as existing among them,⁹ and they continue steadily along the path of history, till in the pages of Evagrius and Theodoret, in the Lives of Hilarion and Paul, by St. Jerome, of Antony, by St. Athanasius, and of Gregory Thaumaturgus, by his namesake of Nyssa, and in the Dialogues of St. Gregory the Great, they attain as grotesque an extravagance as the wildest mediæval legends. Few things are more striking than the assertions hazarded on this matter by some of the ablest of the Fathers. Thus, St. Irenæus assures us that all Christians possessed the power of working miracles; that they prophesied, cast out devils, healed the sick, and sometimes even raised the dead; that some who had been thus resuscitated lived for many years among them, and that it would be impossible to reckon the wonderful acts that were daily performed.¹⁰ St. Epiphanius tells us that some rivers and fountains were annually transformed into wine, in attestation of the miracle of Cana; and he adds that

¹ The immense number of these forged writings is noticed by all candid historians, and there is, I believe, only one instance of any attempt being made to prevent this pious fraud. A priest was degraded for having forged some voyages of St. Paul and St. Thecla. (Tert. *De Baptismo*, 17.)

² *Apol.* 1.

³ *Strom.* vi. c. 5.

⁴ Origen, *Cont. Cels.* v.

⁵ *Oratio* (apud Euseb.) xviii.

⁶ *De Civ. Dei*, xviii. 23.

⁷ Constantine, *Oratio* xix. "His testimonius quidam revicti solent eo confugere ut aiant non esse illa carmina Sibyllina, sed a nostris conficta atque composita." (Lactant. *Div. Inst.* iv. 15.)

⁸ Antonius Possevinus, *Apparatus Sacer* (1606), verb, "Sibylla."

⁹ This subject is fully treated by Middleton in his *Free Enquiry*, whom I have closely followed.

¹⁰ Irenæus, *Contr. Hæres.* ii. 32.

he had himself drunk of one of these fountains, and his brethren of another.¹ St. Augustine notices that miracles were less frequent and less widely known than formerly, but that many still occurred, and some of them he had himself witnessed. Whenever a miracle was reported, he ordered that a special examination into its circumstances should be made, and that the depositions of the witnesses should be read publicly to the people. He tells us, besides many other miracles, that Gamaliel in a dream revealed to a priest named Lucianus the place where the bones of St. Stephen were buried; that those bones, being thus discovered, were brought to Hippo, the diocese of which St. Augustine was bishop; that they raised five dead persons to life; and that, although only a portion of the miraculous cures they effected had been registered, the certificates drawn up in two years in the diocese, and by the orders of the saint, were nearly seventy. In the adjoining diocese of Calama they were incomparably more numerous.² In the height of the great conflict between St. Ambrose and the Arian Empress Justina, the saint declared that it had been revealed to him by an irresistible presentiment—or, as St. Augustine, who was present on the occasion, says, in a dream—that relics were buried in a spot which he indicated. The earth being removed, a tomb was found filled with blood, and containing two gigantic skeletons, with their heads severed from their bodies, which were pronounced to be those of St. Gervasius and St. Protasius, two martyrs of remarkable physical dimensions, who were said to have suffered about 300 years before. To prove that they were genuine relics, the bones were brought in contact with a blind man, who was restored to sight, and with demoniacs, who were cured; the demons, however, in the first place, acknowledging that the relics were genuine; that St. Ambrose was the deadly enemy of the powers of hell; that the Trinitarian doctrine was true; and that those who rejected it would infallibly be damned. The next day St. Ambrose delivered an invective against all who questioned the miracle. St. Augustine recorded it in his works, and spread the worship of the saints through Africa.

The transport of enthusiasm with which the miracles were greeted at Milan enabled St. Ambrose to overcome every obstacle; but the Arians treated them with a derisive incredulity, and declared that the pretended demoniacs had been bribed by the saint.³

Statements of this kind, which are selected from very many that are equally positive, though not equally precise, suggest veins of thought of obvious interest and importance. We are now, however, only concerned with the fact that, with the exception of one or two isolated miracles, such as the last I have noticed, and of one class of miracles which I shall proceed to describe, these prodigies, whether true or false, were wrought for the exclusive edification of confirmed believers. The exceptional miracles were those of exorcism, which occupied a very singular position in the early Church. The belief that certain diseases were inflicted by Divine agency was familiar to the ancients, but among the early Greeks the notion of diabolical possession appears to have been unknown. A *dæmon*, in the philosophy of Plato, though inferior to a deity, was not an evil spirit, and it is extremely doubtful whether the existence of evil *dæmons* was known either to the Greeks or Romans till about the time of the advent of Christ.⁴ The belief was introduced with the Oriental superstitions which then poured into Rome, and it brought in its train the notions of possession and exorcism. The Jews, who in their own country appear to have regarded it as a most ordinary occurrence to meet men walking about visibly possessed by devils, and who professed to have learnt from Solomon the means of expelling them, soon became the principal exorcists, accomplishing their feats partly by adjuration, and partly by means of a certain miraculous root named Baaras. Josephus assures us that he had himself, in the reign of Vespasian, seen a Jew named Eleazar drawing by these means a *dæmon* through the nostrils of a possessed person, who fell to the ground on the accomplishment of the

¹ This history is related by St. Ambrose in a letter to his sister Marcellina; by St. Paulinus of Nola, in his *Life of Ambrose*; and by St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, xlii. 8; *Confess.* ix. 7.

² Plutarch thought they were known by Plato, but this opinion has been much questioned. See a very learned discussion on the subject in Farmer's *Dissertation on Miracles*, pp. 129-140; and Fontenelle, *Hist. des Oracles*, pp. 26, 27. Porphyry speaks much of evil *dæmons*.

³ Epiphanius, *Adv. Hæres.* n. 30.

⁴ St. Aug. *De Civ. Dei*, xlii. 8.

miracle; while, upon the command of the magician, the devil, to prove that it had really left its victim, threw down a cup of water which had been placed at a distance.¹ The growth of Neo-Platonism and kindred philosophies greatly strengthened the belief, and some of the later philosophers, as well as many religious charlatans, practised exorcism. But, of all classes, the Christians became in this respect the most famous. From the time of Justin Martyr, for about two centuries, there is, I believe, not a single Christian writer who does not solemnly and explicitly assert the reality and frequent employment of this power;² and although, after the Council of Laodicea, the instances became less numerous, they by no means ceased. The Christians fully recognised the supernatural power possessed by the Jewish and Gentile exorcists, but they claimed to be in many respects their superiors. By the simple sign of the cross, or by repeating the name of their Master, they professed to be able to cast out devils which had resisted all the enchantments of pagan exorcists, to silence the oracles, to compel the dæmons to confess the truth of the Christian faith. Sometimes their power extended still further. Dæmons, we are told, were accustomed to enter into animals, and these also were expelled by the Christian adoration. St. Jerome, in his *Life of St. Hilarion*, has given us a graphic account of the courage with which that saint confronted, and the success with which he relieved, a possessed

camel.³ In the reign of Julian, the very bones of the martyr Babylas were sufficient to silence the oracle of Daphne; and when, amid the triumphant chants of the Christians, the relics, by the command of Julian, were removed, the lightning descended from heaven and consumed the temple.⁴ St. Gregory Thaumaturgus having expelled the dæmons from an idol temple, the priest, finding his means of subsistence destroyed, came to the saint, imploring him to permit the oracles to be renewed. St. Gregory, who was then on his journey, wrote a note containing the words "Satan, return," which was immediately obeyed, and the priest, awe-struck by the miracle, was converted to Christianity.⁵ Tertullian, writing to the pagans in a time of persecution, in language of the most deliberate earnestness, challenges his opponents to bring forth any person who is possessed by a dæmon or any of those virgins or prophets who are supposed to be inspired by a divinity. He asserts that, in reply to the interrogation of any Christian, the dæmons will be compelled to confess their diabolical character; he invites the pagans, if it be otherwise, to put the Christian immediately to death; and he proposes this as at once the simplest and most decisive demonstration of the faith.⁶ Justin Martyr,⁷ Origen,⁸ Lactantius,⁹ Athanasius,¹⁰ and Minucius

¹ *Vit. Hilar.* Origen notices that cattle were sometimes possessed by devils. See Middleton's *Free Enquiry*, pp. 88, 89.

² The miracle of St. Babylas is the subject of a homily by St. Chrysostom, and is related at length by Theodoret, Sozomen, and Socrates. Libanius mentions that, by command of Julian, the bones of St. Babylas were removed from the temple. The Christians said the temple was destroyed by lightning; the pagans declared it was burnt by the Christians, and Julian ordered measures of reprisal to be taken. Amm. Marcellinus, however, mentions a report that the fire was caused accidentally by one of the numerous candles employed in the ceremony. The people of Antioch defied the emperor by chanting, as they removed the relics, "Confounded be all they that trust in graven images."

³ See the *Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus*, by Gregory of Nyssa. St. Gregory the Great assures us (*Dial.* iii. 10) that Sabinus, Bishop of Placentia, wrote a letter to the River Po, which had overflowed its banks and flooded some church lands. When the letter was thrown into the stream the waters at once subsided.

⁴ "Edatur hic aliquis sub tribunalibus vestris, quem dæmone agi constat. Jussus a quolibet Christiano loqui spiritus ille, tam se dæmonem confitebitur de vero, quam alibi deum de falso. Æque producatúr aliquis ex iis qui de deo pati existimantur, qui aris inhiantes numen de nidore concipiunt... nisi se dæmones confessi fuerint, Christiano mentiri non audentes, ibidem illius Christiani procacissimi sanguinem fundite. Quid isto opere manifestius? quid hæc probatione fidelius?" (*Tert. Apol.* xiii.)

⁵ *Apol.* ii; *Trypho.*

⁷ *Inst. Div.* iv. 27.

⁶ *Cont. Cels.* vii.

⁸ *Life of Antony.*

¹ Josephus, *Antiq.* viii. 2, § 5.

² This very curious subject is fully treated by Baltus (*Réponse à l'Histoire des Oracles*, Strasbourg, 1707, published anonymously in reply to Van Dale and Fontenelle), who believed in the reality of the pagan as well as the patristic miracles, by Bingham (*Antiquities of the Christian Church*, vol. 1. pp. 310-324), who thinks the pagan and Jewish exorcists were impostors, but not the Christians, and by Middleton (*Free Enquiry*, pp. 80-96), who disbelieves in all the exorcists after the apostolic times. It has also been the subject of a special controversy in England, carried on by Dodwell, Church, Farmer, and others. Archdeacon Church says: "If we cannot vindicate them [the Fathers of the first three centuries] on this article, their credit must be lost for ever; and we must be obliged to decline all further defence of them. It is impossible for any words more strongly to express a claim to this miracle than those used by all the best writers of the second and third centuries." (*Vindication of the Miracles of the First Three Centuries*, p. 199.) So, also, Baltus: "De tous les anciens auteurs ecclésiastiques, n'y en ayant pas un qui n'ait parlé de ce pouvoir admirable que les chrétiens avoient de chasser les démons" (p. 196). Gregory of Tours describes exorcism as sufficiently common in his time, and mentions having himself seen a monk named Julian cure by his words a possessed person. (*Hist.* iv. 32.)

Felix,¹ all in language equally solemn and explicit, call upon the pagans to form their opinions on the confessions wrung from their own gods. We hear from them that when a Christian began to pray, to make the sign of the cross, or to utter the name of his Master in the presence of a possessed or inspired person, the latter, by screams and frightful contortions, exhibited the torture that was inflicted, and by this torture the evil spirit was compelled to avow its nature. Several of the Christian writers declare that this was generally known to the pagans. In one respect, it was observed, the miracle of exorcism was especially available for evidential purposes; for, as dæmons would not expel dæmons, it was the only miracle which was necessarily divine.

It would be curious to examine the manner in which the challenge was received by the pagan writers; but, unhappily, the writings which were directed against the faith having been destroyed by the Christian emperors, our means of information on this point are very scanty. Some information, however, we possess, and it would appear to show that, among the educated classes at least, these phenomena did not extort any great admiration. The eloquent silence about diabolical possession observed by the early philosophers when discussing such questions as the nature of the soul and of the spiritual world, decisively shows that in their time possession had not assumed any great prominence or acquired any general credence. Plutarch, who admitted the reality of evil dæmons, and who was the most strenuous defender of the oracles, treats the whole class of superstitions to which exorcism belongs with much contempt.² Marcus Aurelius, in recounting the benefits he had received from different persons with whom he had been connected, acknowledges his debt of gratitude to the philosopher Diognetus for having taught him to give no credence to magicians, jugglers, and expellers of dæmons.³ Lucian declares that every cunning juggler could make his fortune by going over to the Christians and preying upon their simplicity.⁴ Celsus described the Christians as jugglers performing their tricks among the young and the credulous.⁵ The most decisive

evidence, however, we possess is a law of Ulpian, directed, it is thought, against the Christians, which condemns those "who use incantations or imprecations, or (to employ the common word of impostors) exorcisms."⁶ Modern criticism has noted a few facts which may throw some light upon this obscure subject. It has been observed that the symptoms of possession were for the most part identical with those of lunacy or epilepsy; that it is quite possible that the excitement of an imposing religious ceremony might produce or suspend the disorder; that leading questions might in these cases be followed by the desired answers; and that some passages from the Fathers show that the exorcisms were not always successful, or the cures always permanent. It has been observed, too, that at first the power of exorcism was open to all Christians without restraint; that this licence, in an age when religious jugglers were very common, and in a Church whose members were very credulous, gave great facilities to impostors; that when the Laodicean Council, in the fourth century, forbade anyone to exorcise, except those who were duly authorised by the bishop, these miracles speedily declined; and that, in the very beginning of the fifth century, a physician named Posidonius denied the existence of possession.⁷

To sum up this whole subject, we may conclude that what is called the evidential system had no prominent place in effecting the conversion of the Roman Empire. Historical criticisms were far too imperfect to make appeals to the miracles of former days of any value, and the notion of the wide diffusion of miraculous or magical powers, as well as the generally private character of the alleged miracles of the patristic age, made contemporary wonders very unimpressive. The prophecies attributed to the Sibyls, and the practice of exorcism, had, however, a certain weight; for the first were

which Vopiscus (Saturninus) attributes to Hadrian: "Nemo illic [i.e., in Egypt] archisynagogus Judæorum, nemo Samaritanus, nemo Christianorum presbyter, non mathematicus, non aruspex, non aliptes."

¹ "Si incantavit, si imprecatus est, si (ut vulgari verbo impostorum utor) exorcizavit." (Bingham, *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, Oxf., 1855, vol. 4, p. 318.) This law is believed to have been directed specially against the Christians, because these were very prominent as exorcists, and because Lactantius (*Inst. Div.* v. 11) says that Ulpian had collected the laws against them.

² Philostorgius, *Hist. Eccl.* viii. 10.

¹ Octavius

³ 16

⁵ Origen, *Adv. Cels.* vi.

² *De Superstitione*

⁴ *De Mort. Peregrin.*

Compare the curious letter

connected with a religious authority, long and deeply revered at Rome, and the second had been forced by several circumstances into great prominence. But the effect even of these may be safely regarded as altogether subsidiary, and the main causes of the conversion must be looked for in another and a wider sphere.

These causes were the general tendencies of the age. They are to be found in that vast movement of mingled scepticism and credulity, in that amalgamation or dissolution of many creeds, in that profound transformation of habits, of feelings, and of ideals, which I have attempted to paint in the last chapter. Under circumstances more favourable to religious proselytism than the world had ever before known, with the path cleared by a long course of destructive criticism, the religions and philosophies of mankind were struggling for the mastery in that great metropolis where all were amply represented, and in which alone the destinies of the world could be decided. Among the educated a frigid Stoicism, teaching a majestic but unattainable grandeur, and scorning the support of the affections, the hope of another world, and the consolations of worship, had for a time been in the ascendant, and it only terminated its noble and most fruitful career when it had become manifestly inadequate to the religious wants of the age. Among other classes religion after religion ran its conquering course. The Jews, although a number of causes had made them the most hated of all the Roman subjects, and although their religion, from its intensely national character, seemed peculiarly unsuited for proselytism, had yet, by the force of their monotheism, their charity, and their exorcisms, spread the creed of Moses far and wide. The Empress Poppæa is said to have been a proselyte. The passion of Roman women for Jewish rites was one of the complaints of Juvenal. The Sabbath and the Jewish fasts became familiar facts in all the great cities, and the antiquity of the Jewish law the subject of eager discussion. Other Oriental religions were even more successful. The worship of Mithra, and, above all, of the Egyptian divinities, attracted their thousands, and during more than three centuries the Roman writings are crowded with allusions to their progress. The mysteries of the

Bona Dea,¹ the solemn worship of Isis, the expiatory rites that cleansed the guilty soul, excited a very delirium of enthusiasm. Juvenal describes the Roman women, at the dawn of the winter day, breaking the ice of the Tiber to plunge three times into its sacred stream, dragging themselves on bleeding knees in penance around the field of Tarquin, offering to undertake pilgrimages to Egypt to seek the holy water for the shrine of Isis, fondly dreaming that they had heard the voice of the goddess.² Apuleius has drawn a graphic picture of the solemn majesty of her processions, and the spell they cast upon the most licentious and the most sceptical.³ Commodus, Caracalla, and Heliogabalus were passionately devoted to them.⁴ The temples of Isis and Serapis, and the statues of Mithra, are among the last prominent works of Roman art. In all other forms the same credulity was manifested. The oracles that had been silent were heard again; the astrologers swarmed in every city; the philosophers were surrounded with an atmosphere of legend; the Pythagorean school had raised credulity into a system. On all sides, and to a degree unparalleled in history, we find men who were no longer satisfied with their old local religion, thirsting for belief, passionately and restlessly seeking for a new faith.

In the midst of this movement, Christianity gained its ascendancy, and we can be at no loss to discover the cause of its triumph. No other religion, under such circumstances, had ever combined so many distinct elements of power and attraction. Unlike the Jewish religion, it was bound by no local ties, and was equally adapted for every nation and for every class. Unlike Stoicism, it appealed in the strongest manner to the affections, and offered all the charm of a sympathetic worship. Unlike the Egyptian religions, it united with its distinctive teaching a pure and noble system of ethics, and proved itself capable of realising it in action. It proclaimed, amid a vast movement of social and national amalgamation, the universal brotherhood of mankind. Amid the softening influence of philosophy and civilisation, it taught the supreme sanctity

¹ See Juvenal, *Sat.* vi. 314-335

² *Ibid.* *Sat.* vi. 520-530

³ *Metamorphoses*, book x.

⁴ See their *Lives*, by Lampridius and Spartianus.

of love. To the slave, who had never before exercised so large an influence over Roman religious life, it was the religion of the suffering and the oppressed. To the philosopher it was at once the echo of the highest ethics of the later Stoics, and the expansion of the best teaching of the school of Plato. To a world thirsting for prodigy, it offered a history repiete with wonders more strange than those of Apollonius; while the Jew and the Chaldean could scarcely rival its exorcists, and the legends of continual miracles circulated among its followers. To a world deeply conscious of political dissolution, and prying eagerly and anxiously into the future, it proclaimed with a thrilling power the immediate destruction of the globe, the glory of all its friends, and the damnation of all its foes. To a world that had grown very weary gazing on the cold and passionless grandeur which Cato realised, and which Lucan sung, it presented an ideal of compassion and of love—a Teacher who could weep by the sepulchre of His friend, who was touched with the feeling of our infirmities. To a world, in fine, distracted by hostile creeds and colliding philosophies, it taught its doctrines, not as a human speculation, but as a Divine revelation, authenticated much less by reason than by faith. “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness”; “He that doeth the will of my Father will know the doctrine, whether it be of God”; “Unless you believe you cannot understand”; “A heart naturally Christian”; “The heart makes the theologian,” are the phrases which best express the first action of Christianity upon the world. Like all great religions, it was more concerned with modes of feeling than with modes of thought. The chief cause of its success was the congruity of its teaching with the spiritual nature of mankind. It was because it was true to the moral sentiments of the age, because it represented faithfully the supreme type of excellence to which men were then tending, because it corresponded with their religious wants, aims, and emotions, because the whole spiritual being could then expand and expatiate under its influence, that it planted its roots so deeply in the hearts of men.

To all these elements of attraction, others of a different order must be added. Christianity was not merely a moral influence, or a system of opinions, or an

historical record, or a collection of wonder-working men; it was also an institution definitely, elaborately, and skilfully organised, possessing a weight and a stability which isolated or undisciplined teachers could never rival, and evoking, to a degree before unexampled in the world, an enthusiastic devotion to its corporate welfare, analogous to that of the patriot to his country. The many forms of pagan worship were pliant in their nature. Each offered certain advantages or spiritual gratifications; but there was no reason why all should not exist together, and participation in one by no means implied disrespect to the others. But Christianity was emphatically exclusive; its adherent was bound to detest and abjure the faiths around him as the workmanship of dæmons, and to consider himself placed in the world to destroy them. Hence there sprang a stern, aggressive, and at the same time disciplined enthusiasm, wholly unlike any other that had been witnessed upon earth. The duties of public worship; the sacraments, which were represented as the oaths of the Christian warrior; the fasts and penances and commemorative days, which strengthened the Church feeling; the intervention of religion in the most solemn epochs of life, conspired to sustain it. Above all, the doctrine of salvation by belief, which then for the first time flashed upon the world; the persuasion, realised with all the vividness of novelty, that Christianity opened out to its votaries eternal happiness, while all beyond its pale were doomed to an eternity of torture, supplied a motive of action as powerful as it is perhaps possible to conceive. It struck alike the coarsest chords of hope and fear, and the finest chords of compassion and love. The polytheist, admitting that Christianity might possibly be true, was led by a mere calculation of prudence to embrace it, and the fervent Christian would shrink from no suffering to draw those whom he loved within its pale. Nor were other inducements wanting. To the confessor was granted in the Church a great and venerable authority, such as the bishop could scarcely claim.* To the martyr, besides the fruition of heaven, belonged

* The conflict between St. Cyprian and the confessors, concerning the power of remitting penances claimed by the latter, though it ended in the defeat of the confessors, shows clearly the influence they had obtained.

the highest glory on earth. By winning that bloodstained crown the meanest Christian slave might gain a reputation as glorious as that of a Decius or a Regulus. His body was laid to rest with a sumptuous splendour; his relics, embalmed or shrined, were venerated with an almost idolatrous homage. The anniversary of his birth into another life was commemorated in the Church, and before the great assembly of the saints, his heroic sufferings were recounted. How, indeed, should he not be envied? He had passed away into eternal bliss. He had left upon earth an abiding name. By the "baptism of blood" the sins of a life had been in a moment effaced.

Those who are accustomed to recognise heroic enthusiasm as a normal product of certain natural conditions will have no difficulty in understanding that, under such circumstances as I have described, a transcendent courage should have been evoked. Men seemed indeed to be in love with death. Believing, with St. Ignatius, that they were "the wheat of God," they panted for the day when they should be "ground by the teeth of wild beasts into the pure bread of Christ!" Beneath this one burning enthusiasm all the ties of earthly love were snapped in twain. Origen, when a boy, being restrained by force from going forth to deliver himself up to the persecutors, wrote to his imprisoned father imploring him not to let any thought of his family intervene to quench his resolution or to deter him from sealing his faith with his blood. St. Perpetua, an only daughter, a young mother of twenty-two, had embraced the Christian creed, confessed it before her judges, and declared herself ready to endure for it the martyr's death. Again and again her father came to her in a paroxysm of agony entreating her not to deprive him of the joy and the consolation of his closing years. He appealed to her by the memory of all the tenderness he had lavished upon her—by her infant child—by his own gray hairs, that were soon to be brought down in sorrow to the grave. Forgetting in his

deep anguish all the dignity of a parent, he fell upon his knees before his child, covered her hands with kisses, and, with tears streaming from his eyes, implored her to have mercy upon him. But she was unshaken, though not untouched; she saw her father, frenzied with grief, dragged from before the tribunal; she saw him tearing his white beard, and lying prostrate and broken-hearted on the prison floor; she went forth to die for a faith she loved more dearly—for a faith that told her that her father would be lost for ever.¹ The desire for martyrdom became at times a form of absolute madness, a kind of epidemic of suicide, and the leading minds of the Church found it necessary to exert all their authority to prevent their followers from thrusting themselves into the hands of the persecutors.² Tertullian mentions how, in a little Asiatic town, the entire population once flocked to the proconsul, declaring themselves to be Christians, and imploring him to execute the decree of the emperor and grant them the privilege of martyrdom. The bewildered functionary asked them whether, if they were so weary of life, there were no precipices or ropes by which they could end their days; and he put to death a small number of the suppliants and dismissed the others.³ Two illustrious pagan moralists and one profane pagan satirist have noticed this passion with a most unpleasing scorn. "There are some," said Epictetus, "whom madness, there are others, like the Galileans, whom custom, makes indifferent to death."⁴ "What mind," said Marcus Aurelius, "is prepared, if need be, to go forth from the body, whether it be to be extinguished, or to be dispersed, or to endure?—prepared by deliberate reflection, and not by pure obstinacy, as is the custom of the Christians."⁵ "These

¹ See her Acts in Ruman.

² St. Clem. Alex. *Sermon*, iv. 10. There are other passages of the same kind in other Fathers.

³ *Ad Scapula*, v. Eusebius (*Martyrs of Palestine*, ch. iii.) has given a detailed account of six young men, who in the very height of the Galerian persecution, at a time when the most hideous tortures were applied to the Christians, voluntarily gave themselves up as believers. Sulp. Severus (*Hist.* ii. 32), speaking of the voluntary martyrs under Diocletian, says that Christians then "longed for death as they now long for bishoprics." "Cogi qui potest, nescit mori" was the noble maxim of the Christians.

⁴ Arrian, iv. 7. It is not certain, however, that this passage alludes to the Christians. The followers of Judas of Galilee were called Galileans, and they were famous for their indifference to death. See Joseph. *Antiq.* xviii. 1.

⁵ xi. 3.

² "Thura plane non emimus; si Arabia queruntur scient Sabæi pluri et carioris suas merces Christianis sepeliendis profigari quam dus fumigandis." (*Apol.* 42.) Sometimes the pagans burnt the bodies of the martyrs, in order to prevent the Christians venerating their relics.

³ Many interesting particulars about these commemorative festivals are collected in Cave's *Primitive Christianity*, part i. c. vii. The anniversaries were called "Natalia," or birth-days.

wretches," said Lucian, speaking of the Christians, "persuade themselves that they are going to be altogether immortal, and to live for ever; wherefore they despise death, and many of their own accord give themselves up to be slain."¹

"I send against you men who are as greedy of death as you are of pleasures," were the words which, in after days, the Mohammedan chief addressed to the degenerate Christians of Syria, and which were at once the presage and the explanation of his triumph. Such words might with equal propriety have been employed by the early Christian leaders to their pagan adversaries. The zeal of the Christians and of the pagans differed alike in degree and in kind. When Constantine made Christianity the religion of the State it is probable that its adherents were but a minority in Rome. Even in the days of Theodosius the Senate was still wedded to paganism;² yet the measures of Constantine were both natural and necessary. The majority were without inflexible belief, without moral enthusiasm, without definite organisation, without any of those principles that inspire the heroism either of resistance or aggression. The minority formed a serried phalanx, animated by every motive that could purify, discipline, and sustain their zeal. When once the Christians had acquired a considerable position the question of their destiny was a simple one. They must either be crushed or they must reign. The failure of the persecution of Diocletian conducted them inevitably to the throne.

It may, indeed, be confidently asserted that the conversion of the Roman Empire is so far from being of the nature of a miracle or suspension of the ordinary principles of human nature, that there is scarcely any other great movement on record in which the causes and effects so manifestly correspond. The apparent anomalies of history are not inconsiderable, but they must be sought for in other quarters. That within the narrow limits and scanty population of the Greek States should have arisen men who, in almost every conceivable form of genius, in philosophy, in epic, dramatic and lyric poetry, in written and spoken eloquence, in statesmanship, in sculpture, in painting, and probably also in music, should have attained almost or altogether the

highest limits of human perfection—that the creed of Mohammed should have preserved its pure monotheism and its freedom from all idolatrous tendencies, when adopted by vast populations in that intellectual condition in which, under all other creeds, a gross and material worship has proved inevitable—both these are facts which we can only very imperfectly explain. Considerations of climate, and still more of political, social, and intellectual customs and institutions, may palliate the first difficulty, and the attitude Mohammed assumed to art may supply us with a partial explanation of the second; but I suppose that, after all has been said, most persons will feel that they are in presence of phenomena very exceptional and astonishing. The first rise of Christianity in Judæa is a subject wholly apart from this book. We are examining only the subsequent movement in the Roman Empire. Of this movement it may be boldly asserted that the assumption of a moral or intellectual miracle is utterly gratuitous. Never before was a religious transformation so manifestly inevitable. No other religion ever combined so many forms of attraction as Christianity, both from its intrinsic excellence and from its manifest adaptation to the special wants of the time. One great cause of its success was that it produced more heroic actions and formed more upright men than any other creed; but that it should do so was precisely what might have been expected.

To these reasonings, however, those who maintain that the triumph of Christianity in Rome is naturally inexplicable, reply by pointing to the persecutions which Christianity had to encounter. As this subject is one on which many misconceptions exist, and as it is of extreme importance on account of its connection with later persecutions, it will be necessary briefly to discuss it.

It is manifest that the reasons that may induce a ruler to suppress by force some forms or religious worship or opinion are very various. He may do so on moral grounds, because they directly or indirectly produce immorality; or on religious grounds, because he believes them to be offensive to the Deity; or on political grounds, because they are injurious either to the State or to the government; or on corrupt grounds, because he desires to gratify some vindictive or avaricious passion. From the

¹ Peregrinus.

² Zosimus.

simple fact, therefore, of a religious persecution we cannot at once infer the principles of the persecutor, but must examine in detail by which of the above motives, or by what combination of them, he has been actuated.

Now, the persecution which has taken place at the instigation of the Christian priests differs in some respects broadly from all others. It has been far more sustained, systematic, and unflinching. It has been directed not merely against acts of worship, but also against speculative opinions. It has been supported not merely as a right, but also as a duty. It has been advocated in a whole literature of theology, by the classes that are especially devout, and by the most opposing sects; and it has invariably declined in conjunction with a large portion of the theological dogmas.

I have elsewhere examined in great detail the history of persecutions by Christians, and have endeavoured to show that, while exceptional causes have undoubtedly occasionally occurred, they were, in the overwhelming majority of cases, simply the natural, legitimate, and inevitable consequence of a certain portion of the received theology. That portion is the doctrine that correct theological opinions are essential to salvation, and that theological error necessarily involves guilt. To these two opinions may be distinctly traced almost all the sufferings that Christian persecutors have caused, almost all the obstructions they have thrown in the path of human progress; and those sufferings have been so grievous that it may be reasonably questioned whether superstition has not often proved a greater curse than vice, and that obstruction was so pertinacious that the contraction of theological influence has been at once the best measure and the essential condition of intellectual advance. The notion that he might himself be possibly mistaken in his opinions, which alone could cause a man who was thoroughly imbued with these principles to shrink from persecuting, was excluded by the theological virtue of faith, which, whatever else it might involve, implied at least an absolute unbroken certainty, and led the devotee to regard all doubt, and therefore all action based upon doubt, as sin.

To this general cause of Christian persecution I have shown that two subsidiary influences may be joined. A large

portion of theological ethics was derived from writings in which religious massacres, on the whole the most ruthless and sanguinary upon record, were said to have been directly enjoined by the Deity, in which the duty of suppressing idolatry by force was given a greater prominence than any article of the moral code, and in which the spirit of intolerance has found its most eloquent and most passionate expressions.¹ Besides this, the destiny theologians represented as awaiting the misbeliever was so ghastly and so appalling as to render it almost childish to lay any stress upon the earthly suffering that might be inflicted in the extirpation of error.

That these are the true causes of the great bulk of Christian persecution, I believe to be one of the most certain as well as one of the most important facts in history. For the detailed proof I can only refer to what I have elsewhere written; but I may here notice that that proof combines every conceivable kind of evidence that in such a question can be demanded. It can be shown that these principles would naturally lead men to persecute. It can be shown that from the time of Constantine to the time when the rationalistic spirit wrested the blood-stained sword from the priestly hand, persecution was uniformly defended upon them—defended in long, learned, and elaborate treatises, by the best and greatest men the Church had produced, by sects that differed on almost all other points, by multitudes who proved in every conceivable manner the purity of their zeal. It can be shown, too, that toleration began with the distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental doctrines, expanded in exact proportion to the growing latitudinarianism, and triumphed only when indifference to dogma had become a prevailing sentiment among legislators. It was only when the battle had been won—when the anti-dogmatic party, acting in opposition to the Church, had rendered persecution impossible—that the great body of theologians revised their arguments, and discovered that to punish men for their opinions was wholly at variance with their faith. With the merits of this pleasing though somewhat tardy conversion I am not now concerned; but few

¹ "Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate thee?—yea, I hate them with a perfect hatred."

persons, I think, can follow the history of Christian persecution without a feeling of extreme astonishment that some modern writers, not content with maintaining that the doctrine of exclusive salvation *ought* not to have produced persecution, have ventured, in defiance of the unanimous testimony of the theologians of so many centuries, to dispute the plain historical fact that it *did* produce it. They argue that the pagans, who did not believe in exclusive salvation, persecuted, and that therefore that doctrine cannot be the cause of persecution. The answer is that no sane man ever maintained that all the persecutions on record were from the same source. We can prove by the clearest evidence that Christian persecutions sprang chiefly from the causes I have alleged. The causes of pagan persecutions, though different, are equally manifest, and I shall proceed shortly to indicate them.

They were partly political and partly religious. The governments in most of the ancient States, in the earlier stages of their existence, undertook the complete education of the people; professed to control and regulate all the details of their social life, even to the dresses they wore, or the dishes that were served upon their tables; and, in a word, to mould their whole lives and characters into a uniform type. Hence, all organizations and corporations not connected with the State, and especially all that emanated from foreign countries, were looked upon with distrust or antipathy. But this antipathy was greatly strengthened by a religious consideration. No belief was more deeply rooted in the ancient mind than that good or bad fortune sprang from the intervention of spiritual beings, and that to neglect the sacred rites was to bring down calamity upon the city. In the diminutive Greek States, where the function of the government was immensely enlarged, a strong intolerance existed, which extended for some time not merely to practices, but to writings and discourses. The well-known persecutions of Anaxagoras, Theodorus, Diagoras, Stilpo, and Socrates; the laws of Plato, which were as opposed to religious as to domestic freedom; and the existence in Athens of an inquisitorial tribunal,¹ sufficiently attested it. But long before the final ruin of Greece,

speculative liberty had been fully attained. The Epicurean and the Sceptical schools developed unmolested, and even in the days of Socrates, Aristophanes was able to ridicule the gods upon the stage.

In the earlier days of Rome religion was looked upon as a function of the State; its chief object was to make the gods auspicious to the national policy,² and its principal ceremonies were performed at the direct command of the Senate. The national theory on religious matters was that the best religion is always that of a man's own country. At the same time, the widest tolerance was granted to the religions of conquered nations. The temples of every god were respected by the Roman army. Before besieging a city, the Romans were accustomed to supplicate the presiding deities of that city. With the single exception of the Druids, whose human sacrifices it was thought a matter of humanity to suppress,³ and whose fierce rebellions it was thought necessary to crush, the teachers of all national religions continued unmolested by the conqueror.

This policy, however, applied specially to religious rites practised in the countries in which they were indigenous. The liberty to be granted to the vast confluence of strangers attracted to Italy during the Empire was another question. In the old Republican days, when the censors regulated with the most despotic authority the minutest affairs of life, and when the national religion was interwoven with every detail of political and even domestic transactions, but little liberty could be expected. When Carneades endeavoured to inculcate his universal scepticism upon the Romans, by arguing alternately for and against the same proposition, Cato immediately urged the Senate to expel him from the city, lest the people should be corrupted by his teaching.⁴ For a similar reason all rhetoricians had been banished from the Republic.⁵ The most remarkable, however, and at the

¹ M. Pressensé very truly says of the Romans: "Leur religion était essentiellement un art—l'art de découvrir les desseins des dieux et d'agir sur eux par des rites variés." (*Hist. des Trois premiers Siècles*, tome i. p. 192.) Montesquieu has written an interesting essay on the political nature of the Roman religion.

² Sueton. *Claud.* xxv.

³ Plin. *Hist. Nat.* vii. 31.

⁴ Tacit. *Di. Græc.* xxxv.; Aul. Gell. *Noct.* xv. 11. It would appear, from this last authority, that the rhetoricians were twice expelled.

⁵ See Renan's *Apôtres*, p. 314.

same time the extreme expression of Roman intolerance that has descended to us, is the advice which Mæcenas is represented as having given to Octavius Cæsar before his accession to the throne. "Always," he said, "and everywhere worship the gods according to the rites of your country, and compel others to the same worship. Pursue with your hatred and with punishments those who introduce foreign religions, not only for the sake of the gods—the despisers of whom can assuredly never do anything great—but also because they who introduce new divinities entice many to use foreign laws. Hence arise conspiracies, societies, and assemblies—things very unsuited to a homogeneous empire. Tolerate no despiser of the gods and no religious juggler. Divination is necessary, and, therefore, let the haruspices and augurs by all means be sustained, and let those who will consult them; but the magicians must be utterly prohibited who, though they sometimes tell the truth, more frequently, by false promises, urge men on to conspiracies."¹

¹ This striking passage exhibits very clearly the extent to which in some minds the intolerant spirit was carried in antiquity, and also the blending motives that produced it. We should be, however, widely mistaken if we regarded it as a picture of the actual religious policy of the Empire. In order to realise this, it will be necessary to notice separately liberty of speculation and liberty of worship.

When Asinius Pollio founded the first public library in Rome he placed it in the Temple of Liberty. The lesson which was thus taught to the literary classes was never forgotten. It is probable that in no other period of the history of the world was speculative freedom so perfect as in the Roman Empire. The fearless scrutiny of all notions of popular belief, displayed in the writings of Cicero, Seneca, Lucretius, or Lucian, did not excite an effort of repression. Philosophers were, indeed, persecuted by Domitian and Vespasian for their ardent opposition to the despotism of the throne,² but on their own subjects they were wholly untrammelled. The Greek writers con-

soled themselves for the extinction of the independence of their country by the reflection that in the sphere of intellect the meddling policy of the Greek States was replaced by an absolute and a majestic freedom.³ The fierceness of the opposition of sects faded beneath its influence. Of all the speculative conflicts of antiquity, that which most nearly approached the virulence of later theological controversies was probably that between the Stoics and the Epicureans; but it is well worthy of notice that some of the most emphatic testimonies to the moral goodness of Epicurus have come from the writings of his opponents.

But the policy of the Roman rulers towards religious rites was very different from, and would at first sight appear to be in direct opposition to, their policy towards opinions. An old law, which Cicero mentions, expressly forbade the introduction of new religions,⁴ and in the Republican days and the earliest days of the Empire there are many instances of its being enforced. Thus, in A.U.C. 326, a severe drought having led men to seek help from new gods, the Senate charged the ædiles to allow none but Roman deities to be worshipped.⁵ Lutatius, soon after the first Punic War, was forbidden by the Senate to consult foreign gods, "because," said the historian, "it was deemed right the Republic should be administered according to the national auspices, and not according to those of other lands."⁶ During the second Punic War a severe edict of the Senate enjoined the suppression of certain recent innovations.⁷ About A.U.C. 615 the prætor Hispalus exiled those who had introduced the worship of the Sabasian Jupiter.⁸ The rites of Bacchus, being accompanied by gross and scandalous obscenity, were suppressed, the consul, in a remarkable speech, calling upon the people to revive the religious policy of their ancestors.⁹

¹ See a remarkable passage in Dion Chrysostom, *Or. lxxx. De Libertate*.

² *Cic. De Legib.* ii. 11; Tertull. *Apol.* v.

³ *Livy*, iv. 30. ⁴ *Val. Maximus*, i. 3. § 1.

⁵ *Livy*, xxv. 1. ⁶ *Val. Max.* i. 3. § 2.

⁷ See the account of these proceedings, and of the very remarkable speech of Postumus, in *Livy*, xxxix. 8-19. Postumus notices the old prohibition of foreign rites, and thus explains it: "Judicabant enim prudentissimi viri omnis divini humanque juris, nihil æque dissolvendæ religionis esse, quam ubi non patrio ac externo ritu sacrificaretur." The Senate, though suppressing these rites on account of the outrageous immoralities connected with them, decreed that if anyone thought it a matter of religious duty to perform religious ceremonies to Bacchus, he should be allowed to do so on applying for permission to the

¹ *Dion Cassius*, lii. 36. Most historians believe that this speech represents the opinions, not of the Augustan age, but of the age of the writer who relates it.

² On the hostility of Vespasian to philosophers, see *Xiphilin*, lxi. 13; on that of Domitian, the *Letters of Pliny* and the *Agricola* of Tacitus.

The worship of Isis and Serapis only gained its footing after a long struggle and no small amount of persecution. The gross immorality it sometimes favoured, its wild and abject superstition, so thoroughly alien to the whole character of Roman life and tradition, and also the organisation of its priesthood, rendered it peculiarly obnoxious to the government. When the first edict of suppression was issued, the people hesitated to destroy a temple which seemed so venerable in their eyes, and the consul Æmilius Paulus dispelled their fears by seizing an axe and striking the first blow himself.¹ During the latter days of the Republic edicts had commanded the destruction of the Egyptian temples. Octavius, however, in his younger days, favoured the new worship, but soon after it was again suppressed.² Under Tiberius it had once more crept in; but the priests of Isis, having enabled a patrician named Mundus to disguise himself as the god Anubis, and win the favours of a devout worshipper, the temple, by order of the emperor, was destroyed, the images were thrown into the Tiber, the priests were crucified, and the seducer was banished.³ Under the same emperor four thousand persons were exiled to Sardinia, as affected with Jewish and Egyptian superstitions. They were commissioned to repress robbers; but it was at the same time added, with a characteristic scorn, that if they died through the unhealthiness of the climate it would be but a "small loss."⁴

These measures represent together a considerable amount of religious repression, but they were produced exclusively by notions of policy or discipline. They grew out of that intense national spirit which sacrificed every other interest to the State, and resisted every form of innovation, whether secular or religious, that could impair the unity of the national type, and dissolve the discipline which the predominance of the military spirit and the stern government of the Republic had formed. They were also, in some cases, the result of moral scandals. When, however, it became evident that the internal condition of the Republic was unsuited for the Empire, the rulers

Senate, provided there were not more than five assistants, no common purse, and no presiding priest.

¹ Val. Max. i. 3.

² See Dion Cassius, xl. 47; xlii. 26; xlvii. 15, lv. 6.

³ Joseph. *Antiq.* xviii. 3.

⁴ Tacit. *Annal.* ii. 85.

frankly acquiesced in the change, and from the time of Tiberius, with the single exception of the Christians, perfect liberty of worship seems to have been granted to the professors of all religions in Rome.⁵ The old law upon the subject was not revoked, but it was not generally enforced. Sometimes the new creeds were expressly authorised. Sometimes they were tacitly permitted. With a single exception all the religions of the world raised their heads unmolested in the "Holy City."⁶

The liberty, however, of professing and practising a foreign worship did not dispense the Roman from the obligation of performing also the sacrifices or other religious rites of his own land. It was here that whatever religious fanaticism mingled with pagan persecutions was displayed. Eusebius tells us that religion was divided by the Romans into three parts—the mythology, or legends that had descended from the poets; the interpretations or theories by which the philosophers endeavoured to rationalise, filter, or explain away these legends; and the ritual, or official religious observances. In the first two spheres perfect liberty was accorded, but the ritual was placed under the control of the government, and was made a matter of compulsion.⁷ In order to realise the strength of the feeling that supported it, we must remember that the multitude firmly believed that the prosperity and adversity of the Empire depended chiefly upon the zeal or indifference that was shown in conciliating the national divinities, and also that the philosophers, as I have noticed in the last chapter, for the most part not only practised, but warmly defended, the official observances. The love of truth in many forms was exhibited among the pagan philosophers to a degree which

⁵ Tacitus relates (*Ann.* xi. 15) that under Claudius a "senatus consultum" ordered the pontiffs to take care that the old Roman (or, more properly, Etruscan) system of divination was observed, since the influx of foreign superstitions had led to its disuse; but it does not appear that this measure was intended to interfere with any other form of worship.

⁶ "Sacrosanctam istam civitatem accedo." (Apu- leius, *Metam.* lib. x.) It is said that there were at one time no less than 420 "ædes sacræ" in Rome. (Niebuhr, *De Rituibus Romanorum*, 1716, p. 276.)

⁷ Euseb. *Præp. Evang.* iv. 1. Fontenelle says very truly: "Il y a lieu de croire que chez les payens la religion n'estoit qu'une pratique, dont la spéculation estoit indifférente. Faites comme les autres et croyez ce qu'il vous plaira." (*Hist. des Oracles*, p. 95.) It was a saying of Tiberius, that it is for the gods to care for the injuries done to them: "Deorum injurias diis curæ." (Tacit. *Annal.* i. 73.)

has never been surpassed; but there was one form in which it was absolutely unknown. The belief that it is wrong for a man in religious matters to act a lie, to sanction by his presence and by his example what he regards as baseless superstitions, had no place in the ethics of antiquity. The religious flexibility which polytheism had originally generated, the strong political feeling that pervaded all classes, and also the manifest impossibility of making philosophy the creed of the ignorant, had rendered nearly universal among the philosophers a state of feeling which is often exhibited, but rarely openly professed, among ourselves.¹ The religious opinions of men had but little influence on their religious practices, and the sceptic considered it not merely lawful, but a duty, to attend the observances of his country. No one did more to scatter the ancient superstitions than Cicero, who was himself an augur, and who strongly asserted the duty of complying with the national rites.² Seneca, having recounted in the most derisive terms the absurdities of the popular worship, concludes his enumeration by declaring that "the sage will observe all these things, not as pleasing to the Divinities, but as commanded by the law," and that he should remember "that his worship is due to custom, not to belief."³ Epictetus, whose austere creed rises to the purest monotheism, teaches as a fundamental religious maxim that every man in his devotions should "conform to the customs of his country."⁴ The Jews and Christians, who alone refused to do so, were the representatives of a moral principle that was unknown to the pagan world.

It should be remembered, too, that the Oriental custom of deifying emperors having been introduced into Rome, to burn incense before their statues had become a kind of test of loyalty. This

adoration does not, it is true, appear to have implied any particular article of belief, and it was probably regarded by most men as we regard the application of the term "Sacred Majesty" to a sovereign, and the custom of kneeling in his presence; but it was esteemed inconsistent with Christianity, and the conscientious refusal of the Christians to comply with it aroused a feeling, resembling that which was long produced in Christendom by the refusal of Quakers to comply with the usages of courts.

The obligation to perform the sacred rites of an idolatrous worship, if rigidly enforced, would have amounted, in the case of the Jews and the Christians, to a complete proscription. It does not, however, appear that the Jews were ever persecuted on this ground. They formed a large and influential colony in Rome. They retained undiminished, in the midst of the pagan population, their exclusive habits, refusing not merely all religious communion, but most social intercourse with the idolaters, occupying a separate quarter of the city, and sedulously practising their distinctive rites. Tiberius, as we have seen, appears to have involved them in his proscription of Egyptian superstitions; but they were usually perfectly unmolested, or were molested only when their riotous conduct had attracted the attention of the rulers. The government was so far from compelling them to perform acts contrary to their religion that Augustus expressly changed the day of the distribution of corn in order that they might not be reduced to the alternative of forfeiting their share, or of breaking the Sabbath.⁵

It appears, then, that the old Republican intolerance had in the Empire been so modified as almost to have disappeared. The liberty of speculation and discussion was entirely unchecked. The liberty of practising foreign religious rites, though ostensibly limited by the law against unauthorised religions, was after Tiberius equally secure. The liberty of abstaining from the official national rites, though more precarious, was fully conceded to the Jews, whose jealousy of idolatry was in no degree inferior to that of the Christians. It remains, then, to examine what were the causes of the very exceptional fanaticism and animosity that were directed against the latter.

¹ The most melancholy modern instance I remember is a letter of Hume to a young man who was thinking of taking orders, but who, in the course of his studies, became a complete sceptic. Hume strongly advised him not to allow this consideration to interfere with his career. (Burton, *Life of Hume*, vol. ii. pp. 187, 188.) The utilitarian principles of the philosopher were doubtless at the root of his judgment.

² *De Divinat.* ii. 33; *De Nat. Deor.* ii. 3.

³ "Quæ omnia sapiens servabit tanquam legibus jussa non tanquam diis grata. Meminerimus cultum ejus magis ad morem quam ad rem pertinere." (St. Aug. *De Civ. Dei*, vi. 10.) St. Augustine denounces this view with great power. See, too, Lactantius, *Inst. Div.* ii. 3.

⁴ *Enchirid.* xxxi.

⁵ This is noticed by Philo.

The first cause of the persecution of the Christians was the religious notion to which I have already referred. The belief that our world is governed by isolated acts of Divine intervention, and that in consequence every great calamity, whether physical, or military, or political, may be regarded as a punishment or a warning, was the basis of the whole religious system of antiquity.¹ In the days of the Republic every famine, pestilence, or drought was followed by a searching investigation of the sacred rites, to ascertain what irregularity or neglect had caused the Divine anger, and two instances are recorded in which vestal virgins were put to death because their unchastity was believed to have provoked a national calamity.² It might appear at first sight that the fanaticism which this belief would naturally produce would have been directed against the Jews as strongly as against the Christians; but a moment's reflection is sufficient to explain the difference. The Jewish religion was essentially conservative and unexpansive. Although, in the passion for Oriental religions, many of the Romans had begun to practise its ceremonies, there was no spirit of proselytism in the sect; and it is probable that almost all who followed this religion, to the exclusion of others, were of Hebrew nationality. The Christians, on the other hand, were ardent missionaries; they were, for the most part, Romans who had thrown off the allegiance of their old gods, and their activity was so great that from a very early period the temples were in some districts almost deserted.³ Besides this, the Jews simply abstained from and despised the religions around them. The Christians denounced them as the worship of dæmons, and lost no opportunity of

insulting them. It is not, therefore, surprising that the populace should have been firmly convinced that every great catastrophe that occurred was due to the presence of the enemies of the gods. "If the Tiber ascends to the walls," says Tertullian, "or if the Nile does not overflow the fields, if the heaven refuses its rain, if the earth quakes, if famine and pestilence desolate the land, immediately the cry is raised, 'The Christians to the lions.'"⁴ "There is no rain—the Christians are the cause," had become a popular proverb in Rome.⁵ Earthquakes, which, on account of their peculiarly appalling and, to ignorant men, mysterious nature, have played a very large part in the history of superstition, were frequent and terrible in the Asiatic provinces, and in three or four instances the persecution of the Christians may be distinctly traced to the fanaticism they produced.

There is no part of ecclesiastical history more curious than the effects of this belief in alternately assisting or impeding the progress of different Churches. In the first three centuries of Christian history it was the cause of fearful sufferings to the faith; but even then the Christians usually accepted the theory of their adversaries, though they differed concerning its application. Tertullian and Cyprian strongly maintained, sometimes that the calamities were due to the anger of the Almighty against idolatry, sometimes that they were intended to avenge the persecution of the truth. A collection was early made of men who, having been hostile to the Christian faith, had died by some horrible death, and their deaths were pronounced to be Divine punishments.⁶ The victory which established the power of the first Christian emperor, and the sudden death of Arius, were afterwards accepted as decisive proofs of the truth of Christianity and of the falsehood of Arianism.⁷ But

¹ The ship in which the atheist Diagoras sailed was once nearly wrecked by a tempest, and the sailors declared that it was a just retribution from the gods because they had received the philosopher into their vessel. Diagoras, pointing to the other ships that were tossed by the same storm, asked whether they imagined there was a Diagoras in each. (Cic. *De Nat. Deor.* iii. 37.)

² The vestal Oppia was put to death because the diviners attributed to her unchastity certain "prodigies in the heavens," that had alarmed the people at the beginning of the war with Veii (Livy, ii. 42.) The vestal Urbina was burned alive on account of a plague that had fallen upon the Roman women, which was attributed to her incontinence, and which is said to have ceased suddenly upon her execution (Dion. Halicarn. ix.)

³ Pliny, in his famous letter to Trajan about the Christians, notices that this had been the case in Bithynia.

⁴ Tert. *Apol.* vi. See, too, Cyprian, *Contra Demetrian.*, and Arnobius, *Apol.* lib. i.

⁵ St. Aug. *De Civ. Dei.* ii. 3.

⁶ Instances of this kind are given by Tertullian, *Ad Scabellum*, and the whole treatise *On the Deaths of the Persecutors*, attributed to Lactantius, is a development of the same theory. St. Cyprian's treatise against Demetrianus throws much light on the mode of thought of the Christians of his time. In the later historians, anecdotes of adversaries of the Church dying horrible deaths became very numerous. They were said especially to have been eaten by worms. Many examples of this kind are collected by Jortin. (*Remarks on Eccles. Hist.* vol. i. p. 432.)

⁷ It is remarkable, in all the proclamations and documents which Eusebius assigns to Constantine, some even written by his own hand, how, almost exclusively, he dwells on this worldly superiority of the God adored

soon the manifest signs of the dissolution of the Empire revived the zeal of the pagans, who began to reproach themselves for their ingratitude to their old gods, and who recognised in the calamities of their country the vengeance of an insulted heaven. When the altar of Victory was removed contemptuously from the Senate, when the sacred college of the vestals was suppressed, when, above all, the armies of Alaric encircled the imperial city, angry murmurs arose which disturbed the Christians in their triumph. The standing-point of the theologians was then somewhat altered. St. Ambrose dissected with the most unsparing rationalism the theory that ascribed the national decline to the suppression of the vestals, traced it to all its consequences, and exposed all its absurdities. Orosius wrote his history to prove that great misfortunes had befallen the Empire before its conversion. Salvian wrote his treatise on Providence to prove that the barbarian invasions were a Divine judgment on the immorality of the Christians. St. Augustine concentrated all his genius on a great work, written under the impression of the invasion of Alaric, and intended to prove that "the city of God" was not on earth, and that the downfall of the Empire need, therefore, cause no disquietude to the Christians. St. Gregory the Great continually represented the calamities of Italy as warnings foreboding the destruction of the world. When Rome sank finally before the barbarian hosts it would seem as though the doctrine that temporal success was the proof of Divine favour must be finally abandoned. But the Christian clergy disengaged their cause from that of the ruined Empire, proclaimed its downfall to be a fulfilment of prophecy and a Divine judgment, confronted the barbarian conquerors in all the majesty of their sacred office, and overawed them in the very moment of their victory. In the conversion of the uncivilised tribes the doctrine of special intervention occupied a commanding place. The Burgundians, when defeated by the Huns, resolved, as a last resource, to place themselves under the

protection of the Roman God whom they vaguely believed to be the most powerful, and the whole nation, in consequence, embraced Christianity.¹ In a critical moment of a great battle Clovis invoked the assistance of the God of his wife. The battle was won, and he, with many thousands of Franks, was converted to the faith.² In England the conversion of Northumbria was partly, and the conversion of Mercia was mainly, due to the belief that the Divine interposition had secured the victory of a Christian king.³ A Bulgarian prince was driven into the Church by the terror of a pestilence, and he speedily effected the conversion of his subjects.⁴ The destruction of so many shrines, and the defeat of so many Christian armies by the followers of Mohammed; the disastrous and ignominious overthrow of the Crusaders, who went forth protected by all the blessings of the Church, were unable to impair the belief. All through the Middle Ages, and for some centuries after the Middle Ages had passed, every startling catastrophe was regarded as a punishment, or a warning, or a sign of the approaching termination of the world. Churches and monasteries were built. Religious societies were founded. Penances were performed. Jews were massacred. A long catalogue might be given of the theories by which men attempted to connect every vicissitude of fortune, and every convulsion of nature, with the warnings of theologians. Thus, to give but a few examples: St. Ambrose confidently asserted that the death of Maximus was a consequence of the crime he had committed in compelling the Christians to rebuild a Jewish synagogue they had destroyed.⁵ One of the laws in the Justinian code directed against the Jews, Samaritans, and pagans expressly attributes to them the sterility of the soil, which in an earlier age the pagans had so often attributed to the Christians.⁶ A

¹ Socrates, *Ecc. Hist.* vii. 30.

² Greg. Tur. ii. 30, 31. Clovis wrote to St. Avitus, "Your faith is our victory."

³ Milman's *Latin Christianity* (ed. 1867), vol. ii. pp. 235-245.

⁴ *Ibid.* vol. iii. p. 248.

⁵ *Ep.* xl.

⁶ "An diutius perferimus mutari temporum vices, irata cœli temperie? Quæ Paganorum exacerbatâ perfidia nescit naturâ libramenta servare. Unde enim ver solitam gratiam abjuravit? unde ætas, messe jejuna, laboriosum agricolam in spe destituit aristarum? unde hyemis intemperata ferocitas uberitatem terrarum penetrabili frigore stentilitatis læssione damnavit? nisi quod ad impietatis vindictam transit lege sua nature decretum." (Novell. in Theodos. *De Judæis, Samaritanis, et Hæreticis.*)

by the Christians over those of the heathens, and the visible temporal advantages which attend on the worship of Christianity. His own victory, and the disasters of his enemies, are his conclusive evidences of Christianity. (Milman, *Hist. of Early Christianity*, ed. 1867, vol. ii. p. 327.) "It was a standing argument of Athanasius that the death of Arius was a sufficient refutation of his heresy." (*Ibid.* p. 38a.)

volcanic eruption that broke out at the commencement of the iconoclastic persecution was adduced as a clear proof that the Divine anger was aroused, according to one party, by the hostility of the emperor to the sacred images; according to the other party, by his sinful hesitation in extirpating idolatry.² Bodin, in a later age, considered that the early death of the sovereign who commanded the massacre of St. Bartholomew was due to what he deemed the master crime of that sovereign's reign—he had spared the life of a famous sorcerer.³ In the struggles that followed the Reformation physical calamities were continually ascribed in one age to the toleration, in another to the endowment, of either heresy or Popery.⁴ Sometimes, however, they were traced to the theatre, and sometimes to the writings of freethinkers. But gradually, and almost insensibly, these notions faded away. The old language is often heard, but it is no longer realised and operative, and the doctrine which played so large a part in the history of the world has ceased to exercise any appreciable influence upon the actions of mankind.

In addition to this religious motive, which acted chiefly upon the vulgar, there was a political motive which rendered Christianity obnoxious to the educated. The Church constituted a vast, highly organised, and in many respects secret society, and as such was not only distinctly illegal, but was also in the very highest degree calculated to excite the apprehensions of the government. There was no principle in the Imperial policy more stubbornly upheld than the suppression of all corporations that might be made the nuclei of revolt. The extent to which this policy was carried is strikingly evinced by a letter from Trajan to Pliny, in which the emperor forbade the formation even of a guild of firemen, on the ground that they would constitute an association and hold meetings.⁵ In such a state of feeling the existence of a vast association, governed by countless functionaries, shrouding its meetings and some of its doctrines in impenetrable obscurity, evoking a degree of attachment and devotion greater than could be

elicited by the State, ramifying through the whole extent of the Empire, and restlessly extending its influence, would naturally arouse the strongest apprehension. That it did so is clearly recognised by the Christian apologists, who, however, justly retorted upon the objectors the impossibility of showing a single instance in which, in an age of continual conspiracies, the numerous and persecuted Christians had proved disloyal. Whatever we may think of their doctrine of passive obedience, it is impossible not to admire the constancy with which they clung to it, when all their interests were the other way. But yet the pagans were not altogether wrong in regarding the new association as fatal to the greatness of the Empire. It consisted of men who regarded the Roman Empire as a manifestation of Antichrist, and who looked forward with passionate longing to its destruction. It substituted a new enthusiasm for that patriotism which was the very life-blood of the national existence. Many of the Christians deemed it wrong to fight for their country. All of them aspired to a type of character, and were actuated by hopes and motives, wholly inconsistent with that proud martial ardour by which the triumphs of Rome had been won, and by which alone her impending ruin could be averted.

The aims and principles of this association were very imperfectly understood. The greatest and best of the pagans spoke of it as a hateful superstition, and the phrase they most frequently reiterated, when speaking of its members, was "enemies" or "haters of the human race." Such a charge, directed persistently against men whose main principle was the supreme excellence of love, and whose charity unquestionably rose far above that of any other class, was probably due in the first place to the unsocial habits of the converts, who deemed it necessary to abstain from all the forms of public amusement, to refuse to illuminate their houses, or hang garlands from their portals in honour of the national triumphs, and who somewhat ostentatiously exhibited themselves as separate and alien from their countrymen. It may also have arisen from a knowledge of the popular Christian doctrine about the future destiny of pagans. When the Roman learnt what fate the Christian assigned to the heroes and sages of his nation, and to the immense mass of his living fellow-

² Milman's *Latin Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 354.

³ *Démonomanie des Sorciers*, p. 152.

⁴ See a curious instance in Bayle's *Dictionary*, art. "Vergil."

⁵ Pliny, *Ep.* x. 43. Trajan noticed that Nicomedia was peculiarly turbulent. On the edict against the heretics, or associations, see *Ep.* x. 97.

countrymen, when he was told that the destruction of the once glorious Empire to which he belonged was one of the most fervent aspirations of the Church, his feelings were very likely to clothe themselves in such language as I have cited.

But, in addition to the general charges, specific accusations¹ of the grossest kind were directed against Christian morals. At a time when the moral standard was very low, they were charged with deeds so atrocious as to scandalise the most corrupt. They were represented as habitually, in their secret assemblies, celebrating the most licentious orgies, feeding on human flesh, and then, the lights having been extinguished, indulging in promiscuous, and especially in incestuous, intercourse. The persistence with which these accusations were made is shown by the great prominence they occupy, both in the writings of the apologists and in the narrations of the persecutions. That these charges were absolutely false will now be questioned by no one. The Fathers were long able to challenge their adversaries to produce a single instance in which any other crime than his faith was proved against a martyr, and they urged with a just and noble pride that, whatever doubt there might be of the truth of the Christian doctrines, or of the Divine origin of the Christian miracles, there was, at least, no doubt that Christianity had transformed the characters of multitudes, vivified the cold heart by a new enthusiasm, redeemed, regenerated, and emancipated the most depraved of mankind. Noble lives, crowned by heroic deaths, were the best arguments of the infant Church.² Their enemies themselves not unfrequently acknowledged it. The love shown by the early Christians to their suffering brethren has never been more emphatically attested than by Lucian,³ or the beautiful simplicity of their worship than by Pliny,⁴ or their ardent charity than by Julian.⁵ There was, it is true, another side to the picture; but even when the moral standard of Christians was greatly lowered, it was lowered only to that of the community about them.

These calumnies were greatly encour-

aged by the ecclesiastical rule, which withheld from the unbaptised all knowledge of some of the more mysterious doctrines of the Church, and veiled, at least, one of its ceremonies in great obscurity. Vague rumours about the nature of that sacramental feast, to which none but the baptised Christian was suffered to penetrate, and which no ecclesiastic was permitted to explain either to the catechumens or to the world, were probably the origin of the charge of cannibalism; while the Agapæ or love feasts, the ceremony of the kiss of love, and the peculiar and, to the pagans, perhaps unintelligible, language in which the Christians proclaimed themselves one body and fellow-members in Christ, may have suggested the other charges. The eager credulity with which equally baseless accusations against the Jews were for centuries believed, illustrates the readiness with which they were accepted, and the extremely imperfect system of police, which rendered the verification of secret crimes very difficult, had no doubt greatly enlarged the sphere of calumny. But, in addition to these considerations, the orthodox were in some respects exceedingly unfortunate. In the eyes of the pagans they were regarded as a sect of Jews; and the Jews, on account of their continual riots, their inextinguishable hatred of the Gentile world,⁶ and the atrocities that frequently accompanied their rebellions, had early excited the anger and the contempt of the pagans. On the other hand, the Jew, who deemed the abandonment of the law the most heinous of crimes, and whose patriotism only shone with a fiercer flame amid the calamities of his nation, regarded the Christian with an implacable hostility. Scorned or hated by those around him, his temple levelled with the dust, and the last vestige of his independence destroyed, he clung with a desperate tenacity to the hopes and privileges of his ancient creed. In his eyes the Christians were at once apostates and traitors. He could not forget that in the last dark hour of his country's agony, when the armies of the Gentile encompassed Jerusalem, and

¹ All the apologists are full of these charges. The chief passages have been collected in that very useful and learned work, Kortholt, *De Calumniis contra Christianos*. (Cologne, 1683.)

² Justin Martyr tells us it was the brave deaths of the Christians that converted him. (*Apol.* ii. 12.)

³ Peregrinus.

⁴ *Ep.* x. 97.

⁵ *Ep.* ii.

⁶ Juvenal describes the popular estimate of the Jews —

"Tradidit arcano quodcumque volumine Moses;
Non monstrare vias, eadem nisi sacra colenti,
Quæsitum ad fontem solos deducere verpos."

—*Sat.* xix. 102-103

It is not true that the Mosaic law contains these precepts.

when the hosts of the faithful flocked to its defence, the Christian Jews had abandoned the fortunes of their race, and refused to bear any part in the heroism and the sufferings of the closing scene. They had proclaimed that the promised Messiah, who was to restore the faded glories of Israel, had already come; that the privileges which were so long the monopoly of a single people had passed to the Gentile world; that the race which was once supremely blessed was for all future time to be accursed among mankind. It is not, therefore, surprising that there should have arisen between the two creeds an animosity which paganism could never rival. While the Christians viewed with too much exultation the calamities that fell upon the prostrate people,¹ whose cup of bitterness they were destined through long centuries to fill to the brim, the Jews laboured with unwearied hatred to foment by calumnies the passions of the pagan multitude.² On the other hand, the Catholic Christians showed themselves extremely willing to draw down the sword of the persecutor upon the heretical sects. When the pagans accused the Christians of indulging in orgies of gross licentiousness, the first apologist, while repudiating the charge, was careful to add, of the heretics, "Whether or not these people commit those shameful and fabulous acts, the putting out the lights, indulging in promiscuous intercourse, and eating human flesh, I know not."³ In a few years the language of doubt and insinuation was exchanged for that of direct assertion; and, if we may believe St. Irenæus and St. Clement of Alexandria, the followers of Carpocrates, the Marcionites, and some other Gnostic sects, habitually indulged, in their secret meetings, in acts of impurity and licentiousness as hideous and as monstrous as can be conceived, and their conduct was one of the causes of the persecution of the orthodox.⁴ Even the most extravagant charges of the pagan populace were reiterated by the Fathers in their accusations of the Gnostics. St. Epiphanius, in the fourth

century, assures us that some of their sects were accustomed to kill, to dress with spices, and to eat the children born of their promiscuous intercourse.⁵ The heretics, in their turn, gladly accused the Catholics,⁶ while the Roman judge, in whose eyes Judaism, orthodox Christianity, and heresy were but slightly differing modifications of one despicable superstition, doubtless found in this interchange of accusations a corroboration of his prejudices.

Another cause of the peculiar animosity felt against the Christians was the constant interference with domestic life, arising from the great number of female conversions. The Christian teacher was early noted for his unrivalled skill in playing on the chords of a woman's heart.⁷ The graphic title of "Earpicker of ladies,"⁸ which was given to a seductive pontiff of a somewhat later period, might have been applied to many in the days of the persecution; and to the Roman, who regarded the supreme authority of the head of the family, in

¹ Epiphanius, *Adv. Hæc.* lib. i. Hæc. 26. The charge of murdering children, and especially infants, occupies a very prominent place among the recriminations of religionists. The pagans, as we have seen, brought it against the Christians, and the orthodox against some of the early heretics. The Christians accused Julian of murdering infants for magical purposes, and the bed of the Orontes was said to have been choked with their bodies. The accusation was then commonly directed against the Jews, against the witches, and against the midwives, who were supposed to be in confederation with the witches.

² See an example in Eusebius, iii. 32. After the triumph of Christianity the Arian heretics appear to have been accustomed to bring accusations of immorality against the Catholics. They procured the deposition of St. Eustathius, Bishop of Antioch, by suborning a prostitute to accuse him of being the father of her child. The woman afterwards, on her deathbed, confessed the imposture. (Theodor. *Hist.* i. 21-22.) They also accused St. Athanasius of murder and unchastity, both of which charges he most triumphantly repelled. (*Ibid.* i. 30.)

³ The great exertions and success of the Christians in making female converts is indignantly noticed by Celsus (*Origen*) and by the pagan interlocutor in Minucius Felix (*Octavius*), and a more minute examination of ecclesiastical history amply confirms their statements. I shall have in a future chapter to revert to this matter. Tertullian graphically describes the anger of a man he knew at the conversion of his wife, and declares he would rather have had her "a prostitute than a Christian." (*Ad Nationes*, l. 4.) He also mentions a governor of Cappadocia, named Hermianus, whose motive for persecuting the Christians was his anger at the conversion of his wife, and who, in consequence of his having persecuted, was devoured by worms. (*Ad Scapul.* 3.)

⁴ "Matronarum Auriscalpius." The title was given to Pope St. Damasus. See Jortin's *Remarks on Ecclesiastical History*, vol. ii. p. 27. Ammianus Marcellinus notices (xxvii. 3) the great wealth the Roman bishops of his time had acquired through the gifts of women. Theodoret (*Hist. Eccl.* ii. 17) gives a curious account of the energetic proceedings of the Roman ladies upon the exile of Pope Liberius.

¹ See Merivale's *Hist. of Rome*, vol. viii. p. 176.

² See Justin Martyr, *Trypho*, xlvii.

³ Justin Martyr, *Apol.* i. 26.

⁴ Eusebius expressly notices that the licentiousness of the sect of Carpocrates occasioned calumnies against the whole of the Christian body. (iv. 7.) A number of passages from the Fathers describing the immorality of these heretics are referred to by Cave, *Primitive Christianity*, part ii. ch. v.

all religious matters, as the very foundation of domestic morality, no character could appear more infamous or more revolting. "A wife," said Plutarch, expressing the deepest conviction of the pagan world, "should have no friends but those of her husband; and, as the gods are the first of friends, she should know no gods but those whom her husband adores. Let her shut the door, then, against idle religions and foreign superstitions. No god can take pleasure in sacrifices offered by a wife without the knowledge of her husband."¹ But these principles, upon which the whole social system of paganism had rested, were now disregarded. Wives in multitudes deserted their homes to frequent the nocturnal meetings² of a sect which was looked upon with the deepest suspicion, and was placed under the ban of the law. Again and again the husband, as he laid his head on the pillow by his wife, had the bitterness of thinking that all her sympathies were withdrawn from him; that her affections belonged to an alien priesthood and to a foreign creed; that, though she might discharge her duties with a gentle and uncomplaining fidelity, he had for ever lost the power of touching her heart—he was to her only as an outcast, as a brand prepared for the burning. Even to a Christian mind there is a deep pathos in the picture which St. Augustine has drawn of the broken-hearted husband imploring the assistance of the gods, and receiving from the oracle the bitter answer: "You may more easily write in enduring characters on the wave, or fly with feathers through the air, than purge the mind of

a woman when once tainted by the superstition."³

I have already noticed the prominence which the practice of exorcism had acquired in the early Church, the contempt with which it was regarded by the more philosophic pagans, and the law which had been directed against its professors. It is not, however, probable that this practice, though it lowered the Christians in the eyes of the educated as much as it elevated them in the eyes of the populace, had any appreciable influence in provoking persecution. In the crowd of superstitions that were invading the Roman Empire, exorcism had a prominent place; all such practices were popular with the masses; the only form of magic which under the Empire was seriously persecuted was political astrology or divination with a view to discovering the successors to the throne, and of this the Christians were never accused.⁴ There was, however, another form of what was deemed superstition connected with the Church, which was regarded by pagan philosophers with a much deeper feeling of aversion. To agitate the minds of men with religious terrorism, to fill the unknown world with hideous images of suffering, to govern the reason by alarming the imagination, was in the eyes of the pagan world one of the most heinous of crimes.⁵ These fears were to the ancients the very definition of superstition, and their destruction was a main object both of the Epicurean and of the Stoic. To men holding such sentiments, it is easy to perceive how obnoxious must have appeared religious teachers who maintained that an eternity of torture was reserved for the entire human race then existing in the world, beyond the range of their own community, and who made the assertion of this doctrine one of their main instruments of success.⁶ Enquiry, among the

¹ *Comp. Præcept.* This passage has been thought to refer to the Christians, if so, it is the single example of its kind in the writings of Plutarch.

² Pliny, in his letter on the Christians, notices that their assemblies were before daybreak. Tertullian and Minucius Felix speak frequently of the "nocturnes convocations," or "nocturnes congregations" of the Christians. The following passage, which the last of these writers puts into the mouth of a pagan, describes forcibly the popular feeling about the Christians: "Qui de ultima læce collectis impertioribus et mulieribus credulis sexus sui facilitate labentibus, plebem profane conjurationis institunt: quæ nocturnis congregationibus et jejuniis solennibus et inhumanis cibis non sacro quodam sed piaculo foderantur, latebrosa et lucifugax natio, in publico muta, in angulis garrula; templa ut busta despicunt, deos despuunt, ridet sacra." (*Octavius*.) Tertullian, in exhorting the Christian women not to intermarry with pagans, gives as one reason that they would not permit them to attend this "nightly convocation." (*Ad Uxorem*, ii. 4.) This whole chapter is a graphic but deeply painful picture of the utter impossibility of a Christian woman having any real community of feeling with a "servant of the devil."

³ *De Civ. Dei*, xix. 23.

⁴ The policy of the Romans with reference to magic has been minutely traced by Maury, *Hist. de la Magie*. Dr. Jeremie conjectures that the exorcisms of the Christians may have excited the antipathy of Marcus Aurelius, he, as I have already noticed, being a disbeliever on this subject. (Jeremie, *Hist. of the Church in the Second and Third Cent.* p. 26.) But this is mere conjecture.

⁵ See the picture of the sentiments of the pagans on this matter, in Plutarch's noble *Treatise on Superstition*.

⁶ Thus Justin Martyr: "Since sensation remains in all men who have been in existence, and everlasting punishment is in store, do not hesitate to believe, and be convinced that what I say is true.... This Gehenna

early theologians, was much less valued than belief,¹ and reason was less appealed to than fear. In philosophy the most comprehensive, but in theology the most intolerant, system is naturally the strongest. To weak women, to the young, the ignorant, and the timid—to all, in a word, who were doubtful of their own judgment—the doctrine of exclusive salvation must have come with an appalling power; and, as no other religion professed it, it supplied the Church with an invaluable vantage-ground, and doubtless drove multitudes into its pale. To this doctrine, we may also, in a great degree, ascribe the agony of terror that was so often displayed by the apostate, whose flesh shrank from the present torture, but who was convinced that the weakness he could not overcome would be expiated by an eternity of torment.² To the indignation excited by such teaching was probably due a law of Marcus Aurelius, which decreed that "if anyone shall do anything whereby the weak minds of any may be terrified by superstitious fear, the offender shall be exiled into an island."³

There can, indeed, be little doubt that a chief cause of the hostility felt against the Christian Church was the intolerant aspect it at that time displayed. The Romans were prepared to tolerate almost

is a place where all will be punished who live unrighteously, and who believe not that what God has taught through Christ will come to pass" (*Apol.* l. 18-19) Arnobius has stated very forcibly the favourite argument of many later theologians: "Cum ergo hæc sit conditio futurorum ut teneri et comprehendi nullius possint anticipationis attactu: nonne purior ratio est, ex duobus incertis et in ambigua expectatione pendentibus, id potius credere quod aliquas spes ferat, quam omnino quod nullas? In illo enim periculi nihil est, si quod dicitur imminere cassum fiat et vacuum. In hoc damnatum est maximum" (*Adv. Gentes*, lib. i.)

¹ The continual enforcement of the duty of belief, and the credulity of the Christians, were perpetually dwelt on by Celsus and Julian. According to the first, it was usual for them to say, "Do not examine, but believe only." According to the latter, "the sum of their wisdom was comprised in this single precept, believe." The apologists frequently notice this charge of credulity as brought against the Christians, and some famous sentences of Tertullian go far to justify it. See Middleton's *Free Enquiry*, Introd. pp. xcii xciii.

² See the graphic picture of the agony of terror manifested by the apostates as they tottered to the altar at Alexandria, in the Decian persecution, in Dionysius *Apud Eusebium*, vi. 41. Miraculous judgments (often, perhaps, the natural consequence of this extreme fear) were said to have frequently fallen upon the apostates. St. Cyprian has preserved a number of these in his treatise *De Lapsis*. Persons, when excommunicated, were also said to have been sometimes visibly possessed by devils. See Church, *On Miraculous Powers in the First Three Centuries*, pp. 54-54.

³ "Si quis aliquid fecerit, quo leves hominum animi superstitione numinis terreantur, Divus Marcus hujusmodi homines in insulam relegari rescripsit." (*Dig.* xlviii. tit. 19, l. 30.)

any form of religion that would tolerate others. The Jews, though quite as obstinate as the Christians in refusing to sacrifice to the emperor, were rarely molested, except in the periods immediately following their insurrections, because Judaism, however exclusive and unsocial, was still an unaggressive national faith. But the Christian teachers taught that all religions, except their own and that of the Jews, were constructed by devils, and that all who dissented from their Church must be lost. It was impossible that men strung to the very highest pitch of religious excitement, and imagining they saw in every ceremony and oracle the direct working of a present dæmon, could restrain their zeal or respect in any degree the feelings of others. Proselytising with an untiring energy, pouring a fierce stream of invective and ridicule upon the gods on whose favour the multitude believed all national prosperity to depend, not unfrequently insulting the worshippers and defacing the idols,¹ they soon stung the pagan devotees to madness, and convinced them that every calamity that fell upon the Empire was the righteous vengeance of the gods. Nor was the sceptical politician more likely to regard with favour a religion whose development was plainly incompatible with the whole religious policy of the Empire. The new Church, as it was then organised, must have appeared to him essentially, fundamentally, necessarily intolerant. To permit it to triumph was to permit the extinction of religious liberty in an empire which comprised all the leading nations of the world, and tolerated all their creeds. It was, indeed, true that in the days of their distress the apologists proclaimed, in high and eloquent language, the iniquity of persecution, and the priceless value of a free worship; but it needed no great sagacity to perceive that the language of the dominant Church would be very different. The pagan philosopher could not foresee the ghastly histories of the Inquisition,

¹ A number of instances have been recorded in which the punishment of the Christians was due to their having broken idols, overturned altars, or in other ways insulted the pagans at their worship. The reader may find many examples of this collected in Cave's *Primitive Christianity*, part i. c. v.; Kortholt, *De Calumnias contra Christianos*; Barbeyrac, *Morale des Pères*, c. xvii.; Tillemont, *Mém. ecclésiast.* tome vii. pp. 354-355; Ceillier, *Hist. des Auteurs sacrés*, tome iii. pp. 531-533. The Council of Ilibens found it necessary to make a canon refusing the title of "martyr" to those who were executed for these offences.

of the Albigenses, or of St. Bartholomew; but he could scarcely doubt that the Christians, when in the ascendant, would never tolerate rites which they believed to be consecrated to devils, or restrain, in the season of their power, a religious animosity which they scarcely bridled when they were weak. It needed no prophetic inspiration to anticipate the time that so speedily arrived, when, amid the wailings of the worshippers, the idols and the temples were shattered, and when all who practised the religious ceremonies of their forefathers were subject to the penalty of death.

There has probably never existed upon earth a community whose members were bound to one another by a deeper or a purer affection than the Christians, in the days of the persecution. There has probably never existed a community which exhibited in its dealings with crime a gentler or more judicious kindness, which combined more happily an unflinching opposition to sin with a boundless charity to the sinner, and which was in consequence more successful in reclaiming and transforming the most vicious of mankind. There has, however, also never existed a community which displayed more clearly the intolerance that would necessarily follow its triumph. Very early tradition has related three anecdotes of the apostle John which illustrate faithfully this triple aspect of the Church. It is said that when the assemblies of the Christians thronged around him to hear some exhortation from his lips, the only words he would utter were, "My little children, love one another"; for in this, he said, is comprised the entire law. It is said that a young man he had once confided to the charge of a bishop, having fallen into the ways of vice and become the captain of a band of robbers, the apostle, on hearing of it, bitterly reproached the negligence of the pastor, and, though in extreme old age, betook himself to the mountains till he had been captured by the robbers, when, falling with tears on the neck of the chief, he restored him to the path of virtue. It is said that the same apostle, once seeing the heretic Cerinthus in an establishment of baths into which he had entered, immediately rushed forth, fearing lest the roof should fall because a heretic was beneath it.¹ All that fierce hatred which

during the Arian and Donatist controversies convulsed the Empire, and which in later times has deluged the world with blood, may be traced in the Church long before the conversion of Constantine. Already in the second century, it was the rule that the orthodox Christian should hold no conversation, should interchange none of the most ordinary courtesies of life, with the excommunicated or the heretic.² Common sufferings were impotent to assuage the animosity, and the purest and fondest relations of life were polluted by the new intolerance. The Decian persecution had scarcely closed, when St. Cyprian wrote his treatise to maintain that it is no more possible to be saved beyond the limits of the Church than it was during the deluge beyond the limits of the ark; that martyrdom itself has no power to efface the guilt of schism; and that the heretic, who for his master's cause expired in tortures upon the earth, passed at once, by that master's decree, into an eternity of torment in hell!³ Even in the arena the Catholic martyrs withdrew from the Montanists, lest they should be mingled with the heretics in death.⁴ At a later period St. Augustine relates that, when he was a Manichean, his mother for a time refused even to eat at the same table with her erring child.⁵

the second by St. Clement of Alexandria, the third by St. Irenæus

¹ The severe discipline of the early Church on this point has been amply treated in Marshall's *Penitential Discipline of the Primitive Church* (first published in 1714, but reprinted in the library of Anglo-Catholic theology), and in Bingham's *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, vol. vi. (Oxford, 1855). The later saints continually dwelt upon this duty of separation. Thus: "St. Théodore de Phérmé disoit, que quand une personne dont nous étions amis estoit tombée dans la fornication, nous devions luy donner la main et faire notre possible pour le relever; mais que s'il estoit tombé dans quelque erreur contre la foi, et qu'il ne voulust pas s'en corriger après les premières remontrances, il falloit l'abandonner promptement et rompre toute amitié avec luy, de peur qu'en nous amusant à le vouloir retirer de ce gouffre, il ne nous y entraînant nous-mêmes." (Tillemont, *Mém. Eccles.* tome xii. p. 367.)

² "Habere jam non potest Deum patrem qui ecclesiam non habet matrem. Si potuit evadere quisquam qui extra arcam Noe fuit, et qui extra ecclesiam foris fuerit evadit. . . hanc unitatem qui non tenet, vitam non tenet et salutem esse martyr non potest qui in ecclesia non est. . . Cum Deo manere non possunt qui esse in ecclesia Dei unanimes noluerunt. Ardeant licet flammis et ignibus traditi, vel objecti bestias animas suas ponunt, non erit illa fidei corona, sed poena perfidie, nec religiose virtutis exitus gloriosus sed desperationis interitus. Occidi talis potest, coronari non potest. Sic se Christianum esse profitetur quo modo et Christum diabolus sæpe mentitur." (Cyprian, *De Unit. Eccles.*)

³ Eusebius, v. 16.

⁴ *Confess.* in. 11. She was afterwards permitted by a special revelation to sit at the same table with her son!

⁵ The first of these anecdotes is told by St. Jerome,

When St. Ambrose not only defended the act of a Christian bishop, who had burnt down a synagogue of the Jews, but denounced as a deadly crime the decree of the Government which ordered it to be rebuilt; * when the same saint, in advocating the plunder of the vestal virgins, maintained the doctrine that it is criminal for a Christian State to grant any endowment to the ministers of any religion but its own, † which it has needed all the efforts of modern liberalism to efface from legislation, he was but following in the traces of those earlier Christians, who would not even wear a laurel crown, ‡ or join in the most innocent civic festival, lest they should appear in some indirect way to be acquiescing in the pagan worship. While the apologists were maintaining against the pagan persecutors the duty of tolerance, the Sibylline books, which were the popular literature of the Christians, were filled with passionate anticipations of the violent destruction of the pagan temples. § And no sooner had Christianity mounted the throne than the policy they foreshadowed became ascendant. The indifference or worldly sagacity of some of the rulers, and the imposing number of the pagans, delayed, no doubt, the final consummation; but, from the time of Constantine, restrictive laws were put in force, the influence of the ecclesiastics was ceaselessly exerted in their favour, and no sagacious man could fail to anticipate the speedy and absolute proscription of the pagan worship. It is related of the philosopher Antoninus, the son of the pagan prophetess Sospitira, that, standing one day with his disciples before that noble temple of Serapis, at Alexandria, which was one of the wonders of ancient art, and which was destined soon after to perish by the rude hands of the Christian monks, the prophetic spirit of his mother fell upon him. Like another prophet before another shrine, he appalled his hearers by the prediction of the approaching ruin. The time would come, he said, when the glorious edifice before them would be overthrown, the carved images would be defaced, the temples of the gods would be turned into the sepulchres of

the dead, and a great darkness would fall upon mankind ! †

And, besides the liberty of worship, the liberty of thought and of expression, which was the supreme attainment of Roman civilisation, was in peril. The new religion, unlike that which was disappearing, claimed to dictate the opinions as well as the actions of men, and its teachers stigmatised as an atrocious crime the free expression of every opinion on religious matters diverging from their own. Of all the forms of liberty, it was this which lasted the longest, and was the most dearly prized. Even after Constantine, the pagans Libanius, Themistius, Symmachus, and Sallust enforced their views with a freedom that contrasts remarkably with the restraints imposed upon their worship, and the beautiful friendships of St. Basil and Libanius, of Synesius and Hypatia, are among the most touching episodes of their time. But though the traditions of pagan freedom, and the true catholicism of Justin Martyr and Origen, lingered long, it was inevitable that error, being deemed criminal, should be made penal. The dogmatism of Athanasius and Augustine, the increasing power of the clergy, and the fanaticism of the monks, hastened the end. The suppression of all religions but one by Theodosius, the murder of Hypatia at Alexandria by the monks of Cyril, and the closing by Justinian of the schools of Athens, are the three events which mark the decisive overthrow of intellectual freedom. A thousand years had rolled away before that freedom was in part restored.

The considerations I have briefly enumerated should not in the smallest degree detract from the admiration due to the surpassing courage, to the pure, touching, and sacred virtues of the Christian martyrs; but they in some degree palliate the conduct of the persecutors, among whom must be included one emperor, who was probably, on the whole, the best and most humane sovereign who has ever sat upon a throne, and at least two others, who were considerably above the

* Ep. xl.

† Ep. xviii.

‡ Tertull. *De Corona*

§ Milman's *Hist. of Christianity*, vol. ii pp. 116-125.

It is remarkable that the Serapeum of Alexandria was, in the Sibylline books, specially menaced with destruction

* Eunapius, *Lives of the Sophists*. Eunapius gives an extremely pathetic account of the downfall of this temple. There is a Christian account in Theodoret (v. 22). Theophilus, Bishop of Alexandria, was the leader of the monks. The pagans, under the guidance of a philosopher named Olympus, made a desperate effort to defend their temple. The whole story is very finely told by Dean Milman. (*Hist. of Christianity*, vol. iii. pp. 68-72.)

average of virtue. When combined with the indifference to human suffering, the thirst for blood, which the spectacles of the amphitheatre had engendered, they assuredly make the persecutions abundantly explicable. They show that if it can be proved that Christian persecutions sprang from the doctrine of exclusive salvation, the fact that the Roman pagans, who did not hold that doctrine, also persecuted, need not cause the slightest perplexity. That the persecutions of Christianity by the Roman emperors, severe as they undoubtedly were, were not of such a continuous nature as wholly to counteract the vast moral, social, and intellectual agencies that were favourable to its spread, a few dates will show.

We have seen that when the Egyptian rites were introduced into Rome, they were met by prompt and energetic measures of repression; that these measures were again and again repeated, but that at last, when they proved ineffectual, the governors desisted from their opposition, and the new worship assumed a recognised place. The history of Christianity, in its relation to the Government, is the reverse of this. Its first introduction into Rome appears to have been altogether unopposed. Tertullian asserts that Tiberius, on the ground of a report from Pontius Pilate, desired to enrol Christ among the Roman gods, but that the Senate rejected the proposal; but this assertion, which is altogether unsupported by trustworthy evidence, and is, intrinsically, extremely improbable, is now generally recognised as false.¹ An isolated passage of Suetonius states that in the time of Claudius "the Jews, being continually rioting, at the instigation of a certain Chrestus,"² were expelled from the city; but no Christian writer speaks of his co-religionists being disturbed in this reign,

while all, with a perfect unanimity, and with great emphasis, describe Nero as the first persecutor. His persecution began at the close of A.D. 64.³ It was directed against Christians, not ostensibly on the ground of their religion, but because they were falsely accused of having set fire to Rome, and it is very doubtful whether it extended beyond the city.⁴ It had also this peculiarity, that, being directed against the Christians not as Christians but as incendiaries, it was impossible to escape from it by apostasy. Within the walls of Rome it raged with great fury. The Christians, who had been for many years⁵ proselytising without restraint in the great confluence of nations and amid the disintegration of old beliefs, had become a formidable body. They were, we learn from Tacitus, profoundly unpopular; but the hideous tortures to which Nero subjected them,

¹ This persecution is fully described by Tacitus (*Annal.* xv. 44), and briefly noticed by Suetonius (*Nero*, xvi.).

² This has been a matter of very great controversy. Looking at the question apart from direct testimony, it appears improbable that a persecution directed against the Christians on the charge of having burnt Rome should have extended to Christians who did not live near Rome. On the other hand, it has been argued that Tacitus speaks of them as "haud perinde in crimine incendi, quam odio humani generis convicti"; and it has been maintained that "hatred of the human race" was treated as a crime and punished in the provinces. But this is, I think, extremely far-fetched; and it is evident from the sequel that the Christians at Rome were burnt as incendiaries, and that it was the conviction that they were not guilty of that crime that extorted the pity which Tacitus notices. There is also no reference in Tacitus to any persecution beyond the walls.

If we pass to the Christian evidence, a Spanish inscription referring to the Neronian persecution, which was once appealed to as decisive, is now unanimously admitted to be a forgery. In the fourth century, however, Sulp. Severus (*lib. ii.*) and Orosius (*Hist.* vii. 7) declared that general laws condemnatory of Christianity were promulgated by Nero; but the testimony of credulous historians who wrote so long after the event is not of much value. Rossi, however, imagines that a fragment of an inscription found at Pompeii indicates a general law against Christians. See his *Bulletino d'Archeologia Cristiana* (Roma, Dec. 1865), which, however, should be compared with the very remarkable *Compte rendu* of M. Aubé, *Acad. des Inscrip. et Belles-lettres*, juin, 1866. These two papers contain an almost complete discussion of the persecutions of Nero and Domitian. Gibbon thinks it quite certain the persecution was confined to the city, Mosheim (*Eccles. Hist.* i. p. 71) adopts the opposite view, and appeals to the passage in Tertullian (*Ap. v.*) in which he speaks of "leges istæ . quas Trajanus ex parte frustratus est, vitando inquiri Christianos," as implying the existence of special laws against the Christians. This passage, however, may merely refer to the general law against unauthorised religions, which Tertullian notices in this very chapter; and Pliny, in his famous letter, does not show any knowledge of the existence of special legislation about the Christians.

³ Ecclesiastical historians maintain, but not on very strong evidence, that the Church of Rome was founded by St. Peter, A.D. 42 or 44. St. Paul came to Rome A.D. 61.

¹ *Apology*, v. The overwhelming difficulties attending this assertion are well stated by Gibbon, ch. xvi. Traces of this fable may be found in Justin Martyr. The freedom of the Christian worship at Rome appears not only from the unanimity with which Christian writers date their troubles from Nero, but also from the express statement in Acts xxviii. 31.

² "Judeos, impulsore Chresto, assidue tumultuantes, Roma expulsi." (Sueton. *Claud.* xxv.) This banishment of the Jews is mentioned in Acts xviii. 2, but is not there connected in any way with Christianity. A passage in Dion Cassius (ix. 6) is supposed to refer to the same transaction. Lactantius notices that the pagans were accustomed to call Christ, *Chrestus*: "Eum immutata litera Chrestum solent dicere." (*Div. Inst.* iv. 7)

and the conviction that, whatever other crimes they might have committed, they were not guilty of setting fire to the city, awoke general pity. Some of them, clad in skins of wild beasts, were torn by dogs. Others, arrayed in shirts of pitch, were burnt alive in Nero's garden.¹ Others were affixed to crosses. Great multitudes perished. The deep impression the persecution made on the Christian mind is shown in the whole literature of the Stoics, which arose soon after, in which Nero is usually the central figure, and by the belief, that lingered for centuries, that the tyrant was yet alive, and would return once more as the immediate precursor of Antichrist, to inflict the last great persecution upon the Church.²

Nero died A.D. 68. From that time, for at least twenty-seven years, the Church enjoyed absolute repose. There is no credible evidence whatever of the smallest interference with its freedom till the last year of the reign of Domitian; and a striking illustration of the fearlessness with which it exhibited itself to the world has been lately furnished in the discovery, near Rome, of a large and handsome porch leading to a Christian catacomb, built above ground between the reigns of Nero and Domitian, in the immediate neighbourhood of one of the principal highways.³ The long reign of Domitian, though it may have been surpassed in ferocity, was never surpassed in the Roman annals in the skilfulness and the persistence of its tyranny. The Stoics and literary classes, who upheld the traditions of political freedom, and who had already suffered much at the hands of Vespasian, were persecuted with relentless animosity. Metius Modestus, Arulenus Rusticus, Senecio, Helvidius, Dion

Chrysostom, the younger Priscus, Junius Mauricus, Artemidorus, Euphrates, Epicetetus, Arria, Fannia, and Gratilla were either killed or banished.⁴ No measures, however, appear to have been taken against the Christians till A.D. 95, when a short and apparently not very severe persecution, concerning which our information is both scanty and conflicting, was directed against them. Of the special cause that produced it we are left in much doubt. Eusebius mentions, on the not very trustworthy authority of Hegesippus, that the emperor, having heard of the existence of the grandchildren of Judas, the brother of Christ, ordered them to be brought before him, as being of the family of David, and therefore possible pretenders to the throne; but on finding that they were simple peasants, and that the promised kingdom of which they spoke was a spiritual one, he dismissed them in peace, and arrested the persecution he had begun.⁵ A pagan historian states that, the finances of the Empire being exhausted by lavish expenditure in public games, Domitian, in order to replenish his exchequer, resorted to a severe and special taxation of the Jews; that some of these, in order to evade the impost, concealed their worship, while others, who are supposed to have been Christians, are described as following the Jewish rites without being professed Jews.⁶ Perhaps, however, the simplest explanation is the truest, and the persecution may be ascribed to the antipathy which a despot like Domitian must necessarily have felt to an institution which, though it did not, like Stoicism, resist his policy, at least exercised a vast influence altogether removed from his control. St. John, who was then a very old man, is said to have been at this time exiled to Patmos. Flavius Clemens, a consul, and a relative of the Emperor, was put to death. His wife, or, according to another account, his niece Domitilla, was banished, according to one account to the island of Pontia, according to another to the island of Pandataria, and many others were compelled to accompany her

¹ On this horrible punishment see Juvenal, *Sat.* i. 155-157.

² Lactantius, in the fourth century, speaks of this opinion as still held by some "madmen" (*De Mort. Persec.* cap. ii.), but Sulp. Severus (*Hist.* lib. ii.) speaks of it as a common notion, and he says that St. Martin, when asked about the end of the world, answered: "Neronem et Antichristum prius esse venturos: Neronem in occidentali plaga regibus subactis decem, imperatorem, persecutionem autem ab eo hactenus excedendam ut idola gentium coli cogat." (*Dial.* li.) Among the pagans, the notion that Nero was yet alive lingered long, and twenty years after his death an adventurer pretending to be Nero was enthusiastically received by the Parthians (Sueton. *Nero*, lvi.).

³ See the full description of it in Rossi's *Bulletino d'Arch. Crist.*, Dec., 1865. Eusebius (iii. 17) and Tertullian (*Apol.* v.) have expressly noticed the very remarkable fact that Vespasian, who was a bitter enemy to the Jews, and who exiled all the leading Stoical philosophers except Musonius, never troubled the Christians.

⁴ See a pathetic letter of Pliny, lib. vi. *Ep.* xi., and also lib. i. *Ep.* v.; and the *Agricola* of Tacitus.

⁵ Euseb. iii. 20.

⁶ "Præter cæteros Judæus fuscus acerbissime actus est. Ad quem deferebantur, qui vel impropositi Judæicam intra urbem viverent vitam, vel dissimulata origine imposita genti tributa non pendissent." (Sueton. *Domit.* xii.) Suetonius adds that, when a young man, he saw an old man of ninety examined before a large assembly to ascertain whether he was circumcised.

into exile.¹ Numbers, we are told, "accused of conversion to impiety or Jewish rites," were condemned. Some were killed, and others deprived of their offices.² Of the cessation of the persecution there are two different versions. Tertullian³ and Eusebius⁴ say that the tyrant speedily revoked his edict, and restored those who had been banished; but according to Lactantius these measures were not taken till after the death of Domitian,⁵ and this latter statement is corroborated by the assertion of Dion Cassius, that Nerva, upon his accession, "absolved those who were accused of impiety, and recalled the exiles."⁶

When we consider the very short time during which this persecution lasted, and the very slight notice that was taken of it, we may fairly, I think, conclude that it was not of a nature to check in any appreciable degree a strong religious movement like that of Christianity. The assassination of Domitian introduces us to the golden age of the Roman Empire. In the eyes of the pagan historian the period from the accession of Nerva, in A.D. 96, to the death of Marcus Aurelius, in A.D. 180, is memorable as a period of uniform good government, of rapidly advancing humanity, of great legislative reforms, and of a peace which was very rarely seriously broken. To the Christian historian it is still more remarkable as one of the most critical periods in the

history of his faith. The Church entered into it considerable indeed, as a sect, but not large enough to be reckoned an important power in the Empire. It emerged from it so increased in its numbers, and so extended in its ramifications, that it might fairly defy the most formidable assaults. It remains, therefore, to be seen whether the opposition against which, during these eighty-four years, it had so successfully struggled was of such a kind and intensity that the triumph must be regarded as a miracle.

Nearly at the close of this period, during the persecution of Marcus Aurelius, St. Melito, Bishop of Sardis, wrote a letter of expostulation to the emperor, in which he explicitly asserts that in Asia the persecution of the pious was an event which "had never before occurred," and was the result of "new and strange decrees"; that the ancestors of the emperor were accustomed to honour the Christian faith "like other religions"; and that "Nero and Domitian alone" had been hostile to it.¹ Rather more than twenty years later Tertullian asserted, in language equally distinct and emphatic, that the two persecutors of the Christians were Nero and Domitian, and that it would be impossible to name a single good sovereign who had molested them. Marcus Aurelius himself Tertullian refuses to number among the persecutors, and even, relying upon a letter which was falsely imputed to him, enrols him among the protectors of the Church.² About a century later Lactantius, reviewing the history of the persecutions, declared that the good sovereigns who followed Domitian abstained from persecuting, and passes at once from the persecution of Domitian to that of Decius. Having noticed the measures of the former emperor, he proceeds: "The acts of the tyrant being revoked, the Church was not only restored to its former state, but shone forth with a greater splendour and luxuriance; and a period following in which many good sovereigns wielded the Imperial sceptre, it suffered no assaults from its enemies, but stretched out its hands to the east and to the west;.....but at last the long peace was broken. After many years that hateful monster Decius arose, who troubled the Church."³

¹ Euseb. iii. 18.

² See the accounts of these transactions in Xiphilin, the abbreviator of Dion Cassius (lxvii. 14); Euseb. iii. 17-18. Suetonius notices (*Domit.* xv.) that Flavius Clemens (whom he calls a man "contemptissimæ inertiae") was killed "ex tenuissima suspitione." The language of Xiphilin, who says he was killed for "impiety and Jewish rites"; the express assertion of Eusebius, that it was for Christianity; and the declaration of Tertullian, that Christians were persecuted at the close of this reign, leave, I think, little doubt that this execution was connected with Christianity, though some writers have questioned it. At the same time, it is very probable, as Mr. Merivale thinks (*Hist. of Rome*, vol. vii. pp. 381-384), that though the pretext of the execution might have been religious, the real motive was political jealousy. Domitian had already put to death the brother of Flavius Clemens on the charge of treason. His sons had been recognised as successors to the throne, and at the time of his execution another leading noble named Glabrio was accused of having fought in the arena. Some ecclesiastical historians have imagined that there may have been two Domitillas—the wife and niece of Flavius Clemens. The islands of Pontia and Pandataria were close to one another.

³ "Tentaverat et Domitianus, portio Neronis de crudelitate; sed qua et homo facile captum repressit, restituit etiam quos relegaverat." (*Apol.* 5.) It will be observed that Tertullian makes no mention of any punishment more severe than exile.

⁴ Euseb. iii. 20.

⁵ *De Mort. Persec.* iii.

⁶ Xiphilin, lxviii. 1. An annotator to Mosheim conjectures that the edict may have been issued just before the death of the emperor, but not acted on till after it.

¹ Euseb. iv. 26. The whole of this apology has been recently recovered, and translated into Latin by M. Renan in the *Spicilegium Solesmense*.

² *Apol.* 5.

³ Lactant. *De Mort. Persec.* 3-4.

We have here three separate passages, from which we may conclusively infer that the normal and habitual condition of the Christians during the eighty-four years we are considering, and, if we accept the last two passages, during a much longer period, was a condition of peace; but that peace was not absolutely unbroken. The Christian Church, which was at first regarded simply as a branch of Judaism, had begun to be recognised as a separate body, and the Roman law professedly tolerated only those religions which were expressly authorised. It is indeed true that with the extension of the Empire, and especially of the city, the theory, or at least the practice, of religious legislation had been profoundly modified. First of all, certain religions, of which the Jewish was one, were officially recognised, and then many others, without being expressly authorised, were tolerated. In this manner, all attempts to resist the torrent of Oriental superstitions proving vain, the legislator had desisted from his efforts, and every form of wild superstition was practised with publicity and impunity. Still, the laws forbidding them were unrevoked, although they were suffered to remain for the most part obsolete, or were at least only put in action on the occasion of some special scandal, or of some real or apprehended political danger. The municipal and provincial independence under the Empire was, however, so large that very much depended on the character of the local governor; and it continually happened that in one province the Christians were unmolested or favoured, while in the adjoining province they were severely persecuted.

As we have already seen, the Christians had for many reasons become profoundly obnoxious to the people. They shared the unpopularity of the Jews, with whom they were confounded, while the general credence given to the calumnies about the crimes said to have been perpetrated at their secret meetings, their abstinence from public amusements, and the belief that their hostility to the gods was the cause of every physical calamity, were special causes of antipathy. The history of the period of the Antonines continually manifests the desire of the populace to persecute, restrained by the humanity of the rulers. In the short reign of Nerva there appears to have been no persecution, and our knowledge of the official

proceedings with reference to the religion is comprised in two sentences of a pagan historian, who tells us that the emperor "absolved those who had been convicted of impiety," and "permitted no one to be convicted of impiety or Jewish rites."

Under Trajan, however, some serious, though purely local, disturbances took place. The emperor himself, though one of the most sagacious, and in most respects humane, of Roman sovereigns, was nervously jealous of any societies or associations among his subjects, and had propounded a special edict against them; but the persecution of the Christians appears to have been not so much political as popular. If we may believe Eusebius, local persecutions, apparently of the nature of riots, but sometimes countenanced by provincial governors, broke out in several quarters of the Empire. In Bithynia, Pliny the Younger was the governor, and he wrote a very famous letter to Trajan, in which he professed himself absolutely ignorant of the proceedings to be taken against the Christians, who had already so multiplied that the temples were deserted, and who were arraigned in great numbers before his tribunal. He had, he says, released those who consented to burn incense before the image of the emperor, and to curse Christ, but had caused those to be executed who persisted in their refusal, and who were not Roman citizens, "not doubting that a pertinacious obstinacy deserved punishment." He had questioned the prisoners as to the nature of their faith, and had not hesitated to seek revelations by torturing two maid-servants, but had "discovered nothing but a base and immoderate superstition." He had asked the nature of their secret services, and had been told that they assembled on a certain day before dawn to sing a hymn to Christ as to a god; that they made a vow to abstain from every crime, and that they then, before parting, partook together of a harmless feast, which, however, they had given up since the decree against associations. To this letter Trajan answered that Christians, if brought before the tribunals and convicted, should be punished, but that they should not be sought for; that, if they consented to sacrifice, no inquisition should be made into their past lives, and that no anonymous accusations should be

received against them.¹ In this reign there are two authentic instances of martyrdom.² Simeon, Bishop of Jerusalem, a man, it is said, one hundred and twenty years old, having been accused by the heretics, was tortured during several days, and at last crucified. Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch, was arrested, brought to Rome, and, by the order of Trajan himself, thrown to wild beasts. Of the cause of this last act of severity we are left in ignorance, but it has been noticed that about this time Antioch had been the scene of one of those violent earthquakes which so frequently produced an outburst of religious excitement,³ and the character of Ignatius, who was passionately desirous of martyrdom, may very probably have led him to some act of exceptional zeal. The letters of the martyr prove that at Rome the faith was openly and fearlessly professed; the Government during the nineteen years of this reign never appears to have taken any initiative against the Christians, and, in spite of occasional local tumults, there was nothing resembling a general persecution.

During the two following reigns the Government was more decidedly favourable to the Christians. Hadrian, having heard that the populace at the public games frequently called for their execution, issued an edict in which he commanded that none should be punished simply in obedience to the outcries against them, or without a formal trial and a conviction of some offence against the law, and he ordered that all false accusers should be punished.⁴ His disposition towards the Christians was so pacific as to give rise to a legend that he intended to enrol Christ among the gods;⁵ but it is probable that, although curious on religious matters, he regarded Christianity with the indifference of a Roman freethinker; and a letter is ascribed to him in which he confounded it with the worship of Serapis.⁶ As far as the Government was concerned, the Christians appear to have been entirely un-

molested; but many of them suffered dreadful tortures at the hands of the Jewish insurgents, who in this reign, with a desperate but ill-fated heroism, made one last effort to regain their freedom.⁷ The mutual hostility exhibited at this time by the Jews and Christians contributed to separate them in the eyes of the pagans; and it is said that when Hadrian forbade the Jews ever again to enter Jerusalem, he recognised the distinction by granting a full permission to the Christians.⁸

Antoninus, who succeeded Hadrian, made new efforts to restrain the passions of the people against the Christians. He issued an edict commanding that they should not be molested; and when, as a consequence of some earthquakes in Asia Minor, the popular anger was fiercely roused, he commanded that their accusers should be punished.⁹ If we except these riots, the twenty-three years of his reign appear to have been years of absolute peace, which seems also to have continued during several years of the reign of Marcus Aurelius; but at last persecuting edicts, of the exact nature of which we have no knowledge, were issued. Of the reasons which induced one of the best men who have ever reigned to persecute the Christians we know little or nothing. That it was not any ferocity of disposition or any impatience of resistance may be confidently asserted of one whose only fault was a somewhat excessive gentleness—who on the death of his wife asked the Senate, as a single favour, to console him by sparing the lives of those who had rebelled against him. That it was not, as has been strangely urged, a religious fanaticism resembling that which led St. Louis to persecute is equally plain. St. Louis persecuted because he believed that to reject his religious opinions was a heinous crime, and that heresy was the path to hell. Marcus Aurelius had no such belief, and he, the first Roman Emperor who made the Stoical philosophy

¹ Justin Mart. *Ap.* i. 31. Eusebius quotes a passage from Hegesippus to the same effect. (iv. 8.)

² "Præcepitque ne cui Judæo introeundi Hierosolymam esset licentia, Christianis tantum civitate permissa." (Oros. vii. 13.)

³ A letter which Eusebius gives at full (iv. 13), and ascribes to Antoninus Pius, has created a good deal of controversy. Justin Mart. (*Apol.* i. 71) and Tertullian (*Apol.* 5) ascribe it to Marcus Aurelius. It is now generally believed to be a forgery by a Christian hand, being more like a Christian apology than the letter of a pagan emperor. St. Melito, however, writing to Marcus Aurelius, expressly states that Antoninus had written a letter forbidding the persecution of Christians. (Euseb. iv. 26.)

¹ Pliny, *Ep.* x. 97-98.

² Euseb. lib. iii.

³ There is a description of this earthquake in Merivale's *Hist. of the Romans*, vol. viii pp. 155-156. Orosius (*Hist.* vii. 12) thought it was a judgment on account of the persecution of the Christians.

⁴ Eusebius, iv. 8-9. See, too, Justin Martyr, *Apol.* i. 68-69.

⁵ This is mentioned incidentally by Lampridius in his *Life of A. Severus*.

⁶ See this very curious letter in Vopiscus, *Satur-ninus*.

his religion and his comfort, was also the first emperor who endowed the professors of the philosophies that were most hostile to his own. The fact that the Christian Church, existing as a State within a State, with government, ideals, enthusiasms, and hopes wholly different from those of the nation, was incompatible with the existing system of the Empire, had become more evident as the Church increased. The accusations of cannibalism and incestuous impurity had acquired a greater consistency, and the latter are said to have been justly applicable to the Carpocratian heretics, who had recently arisen. The Stoicism of Marcus Aurelius may have revolted from the practices of exorcism or the appeals to the terrors of another world; and the philosophers who surrounded him probably stimulated his hostility, for his master and friend Fronto had written a book against Christianity,¹ while Justin Martyr is said to have perished by the machinations of the Cynic Crescens.² It must be added, too, that, while it is impossible to acquit the emperor of having issued severe edicts against the Christians,³ the atrocious details of the persecutions in his reign were due to the ferocity of the populace and the weakness of the governors in distant provinces; and it is inconceivable that, if he had been a very bitter enemy of the Christians, Tertullian, writing little more than twenty years later, should have been so ignorant of the fact as to represent him as one of the most conspicuous of their protectors.

But, whatever may be thought on these points, there can, unhappily, be no question that in this reign Rome was stained by the blood of Justin Martyr, the first philosopher, and one of the purest and gentlest natures, in the Church, and that persecution was widely extended. In two far distant quarters, at Smyrna and at Lyons, it far exceeded in atrocity any that Christianity had endured since Nero, and in each case a heroism of the most transcendent order was displayed by the martyrs. The persecution at Smyrna, in which St. Polycarp and many others most nobly died, took place on the occasion of the public games, and we may trace the influence of the Jews in stimulating it.⁴

The persecution at Lyons, which was one of the most atrocious in the whole compass of ecclesiastical history, and which has supplied the martyrology with some of its grandest and most pathetic figures, derived its worst features from a combination of the fury of the populace and of the subserviency of the governor.¹ Certain servants of the Christians, terrified by the prospect of torture, accused their masters of all the crimes which popular report attributed to them—of incest, of infanticide, of cannibalism, of hideous impurity. A fearful outburst of ferocity ensued. Tortures almost too horrible to recount were for hours and even days applied to the bodies of old men and of weak women, who displayed amid their agonies a nobler courage than has ever shone upon a battlefield, and whose memories are immortal among mankind. Blandina and Pothinus wrote in blood the first page of the glorious history of the Church of France.² But although, during the closing years of Marcus Aurelius, severe persecutions took place in three or four provinces, there was no general and organised effort to suppress Christianity throughout the Empire.³

We may next consider, as a single period, the space of time that elapsed from the death of Marcus Aurelius, in A.D. 180, to the accession of Decius, A.D. 249. During all this time Christianity was a great and powerful body, exercising an important influence, and during a great part of it Christians

¹ See the most touching and horrible description of this persecution in a letter written by the Christians of Lyons, in Eusebius, v. 1.

² Sulpicius Severus (who was himself a Gaul) says of their martyrdom (*H. E. lib. ii.*) "Tum primum intra Gallias Martyria visa, serius trans Alpes Dei religione suscepta." Tradition ascribes Gallic Christianity to the apostles, but the evidence of inscriptions appears to confirm the account of Severus. It is at least certain that Christianity did not acquire a great extension till later. The earliest Christian inscriptions found are (one in each year) of A.D. 334, 347, 377, 405, and 409. They do not become common till the middle of the fifth century. See a full discussion of this in the preface of M. Le Blant's admirable and indeed exhaustive work, *Inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule*.

³ It was alleged among the Christians that towards the close of his reign Marcus Aurelius issued an edict protecting the Christians, on account of a Christian legion having, in Germany, in a moment of great distress, procured a shower of rain by their prayers. (*Tert. Apol. 5.*) The shower is mentioned by pagan as well as Christian writers, and is portrayed on the column of Antoninus. It was "ascribed to the incantations of an Egyptian magician, to the prayers of a legion of Christians, or to the favour of Jove towards the best of mortals, according to the various prejudices of different observers." (Merville's *Hist. of Rome*, vol. viii. p. 338.)

¹ It is alluded to by Minucius Felix.

² Eusebius, iv. 16.

³ St. Mehto expressly states that the edicts of Marcus Aurelius produced the Asiatic persecution.

⁴ Eusebius, iv. 15.

filled high civil and military positions. The hostility manifested towards them began now to assume a more political complexion than it had previously done, except, perhaps, in the later years of Marcus Aurelius. The existence of a vast and rapidly-increasing corporation very alien to the system of the Empire confronted every ruler. Emperors like Commodus or Heliogabalus were usually too immersed in selfish pleasures to have any distinct policy; but sagacious sovereigns, sincerely desiring the well-being of the Empire, either, like Marcus Aurelius and Diocletian, endeavoured to repress the rising creed, or, like Alexander Severus, and at last Constantine, actively encouraged it. The measures Marcus Aurelius had taken against Christianity were arrested under Commodus, whose favourite mistress, Marcia, supplies one of the very few recorded instances of female influence, which has been the cause of so much persecution, being exerted in behalf of toleration;² yet a Christian philosopher named Apollonius, and at the same time, by a curious retribution, his accuser, were in this reign executed at Rome.³ During the sixty-nine years we are considering the general peace of the Church was only twice broken. The first occasion was in the reign of Septimus Severus, who was for some time very favourable to the Christians, but who, in A.D. 202 or 203, issued an edict forbidding any pagan to join the Christian or Jewish faith;⁴ and this edict was followed by a sanguinary persecution in Africa and Syria, in which the father of Origen, and also St. Felicitas and St. Perpetua, perished. This persecution does not appear to have extended to the West, and was apparently rather the work of

provincial governors, who interpreted the Imperial edict as a sign of hostility to the Christians, than the direct act of the emperor,⁵ whose decree applied only to Christians actively proselytising. It is worthy of notice that Origen observed that previous to this time the number of Christian martyrs had been very small.⁶ The second persecution was occasioned by the murder of Alexander Severus by Maximinus. The usurper pursued with great bitterness the leading courtiers of the deceased emperor, among whom were some Christian bishops,⁷ and about the same time severe earthquakes in Pontus and Cappadocia produced the customary popular ebullitions. But with these exceptions the Christians were undisturbed. Caracalla, Macrinus, and Heliogabalus took no measures against them, while Alexander Severus, who reigned for thirteen years, warmly and steadily supported them. A pagan historian assures us that this emperor intended to build temples in honour of Christ, but was dissuaded by the priests, who urged that all the other temples would be deserted. He venerated in his private oratory the statues of Apollonius of Tyana, Abraham, Orpheus, and Christ. He decreed that the provincial governors should not be appointed till the people had the opportunity of declaring any crime they had committed, borrowing this rule avowedly from the procedure of the Jews and Christians in electing their clergy; he ordered the precept, "Do not unto others what you would not they should do unto you," to be engraven on the palace and other public buildings; and he decided a dispute concerning a piece of ground which the Christians had occupied, and which the owners of certain eating-houses claimed, in favour of the former, on the ground that the worship of a god should be most considered.⁸ Philip the Arab, who reigned during the last five years of the period we are considering, was so favourable to the Christians that he was believed,

² Xiphilin, lxxii. 4. The most atrocious of the pagan persecutions was attributed, as we shall see, to the mother of Galerius, and in Christian times the Spanish Inquisition was founded by Isabella the Catholic; the massacre of St. Bartholomew was chiefly due to Catherine of Medici, and the most horrible English persecution to Mary Tudor.

³ Euseb. v. 21. The accuser, we learn from St. Jerome, was a slave. On the law condemning slaves who accused their masters, compare Pressensé, *Hist. des Trois premiers Siècles* (2me série), tome i. pp. 182-183, and Jérémie's *Church History of Second and Third Centuries*, p. 29. Apollonius was of senatorial rank. It is said that some other martyrs died at the same time.

⁴ "Judæos fieri sub gravi poena vetuit. Idem etiam de Christianis sanxit." (Spartian *S. Severus*.) The persecution is described by Eusebius, lib. vi. Tertullian says Severus was favourable to the Christians, a Christian named Proculus (whom he, in consequence, retained in the palace till his death) having cured him of an illness by the application of oil. (*Ad Scapula*, 4).

⁵ "Of the persecution under Severus there are few, if any, traces in the West. It is confined to Syria, perhaps to Cappadocia, to Egypt, and to Africa, and in the latter provinces appears as the act of hostile governors proceeding upon the existing laws, rather than the consequence of any recent edict of the emperor." (Milman's *Hist. of Christianity*, vol. ii. pp. 156-157.)

⁶ *Adv. Cel.* iii. See Gibbon, ch. xvi.

⁷ Eusebius, vi. 28.

⁸ Lampridius, *A. Severus*. The historian adds: "Judæis privilegia reservavit. Christianos esse passus est."

though on no trustworthy evidence, to have been baptised.

We have now reviewed the history of the persecutions to the year A.D. 249, or about two hundred years after the planting of Christianity in Rome. We have seen that, although during that period much suffering was occasionally endured, and much heroism displayed, by the Christians, there was, with the very doubtful exception of the Neronian persecution, no single attempt made to suppress Christianity throughout the Empire. Local persecutions of great severity had taken place at Smyrna and Lyons, under Marcus Aurelius; in Africa and some Asiatic provinces, under Severus; popular tumults, arising in the excitement of the public games, or produced by some earthquake or inundation, or by some calumnious accusation, were not unfrequent; but there was at no time that continuous, organised, and universal persecution by which, in later periods, ecclesiastical tribunals have again and again suppressed opinions repugnant to their own; and there was no part of the Empire in which whole generations did not pass away absolutely undisturbed. No martyr had fallen in Gaul or in great part of Asia Minor till Marcus Aurelius. In Italy, after the death of Nero, with the exception of some slight troubles under Domitian and Maximinus, probably due to causes altogether distinct from religion, there were, during the whole period we are considering, only a few isolated instances of martyrdom. The bishops, as the leaders of the Church, were the special objects of hostility, and several in different parts of the world had fallen; but it is extremely questionable whether any Roman bishop perished after the apostolic age, till Fabianus was martyred under Decius.¹ If Christianity was not formally authorised, it was, like many other religions in a similar position, generally acquiesced in, and, during a great part of the time we have reviewed,

its professors appear to have found no obstacles to their preferment in the Court or in the army. The emperors were for the most part indifferent or favourable to them. The priests in the pagan society had but little influence, and do not appear to have taken any prominent part in the persecution till near the time of Diocletian. With the single exception of the Jews, no class held that doctrine of the criminality of error which has been the parent of most modern persecutions; and although the belief that great calamities were the result of neglecting or insulting the gods furnished the pagans with a religious motive for persecution, this motive only acted on the occasion of some rare and exceptional catastrophe.² In Christian times, the first objects of the persecutor are to control education, to prevent the publication of any heterodox works, to institute such a minute police inspection as to render impossible the celebration of the worship he desires to suppress. But nothing of this kind was attempted, or indeed was possible, in the period we are considering. With the exception of the bodyguard of the emperor, almost the whole army, which was of extremely moderate dimensions, was massed along the vast frontier of the Empire. The police force was of the scantiest kind, sufficient only to keep common order in the streets. The Government had done something to encourage, but absolutely nothing to control, education, and parents or societies were at perfect liberty to educate the young as they pleased. The expansion of literature, by reason of the facilities which slavery gave to transcription, was very great, and it was for the most part entirely uncontrolled.³ Augustus, it is

¹ Tacitus has a very ingenious remark on this subject, which illustrates happily the half-scepticism of the Empire. After recounting a number of prodigies that were said to have taken place in the reign of Otho, he remarks that these were things habitually noticed in the ages of ignorance, but now only noticed in periods of terror. "Rudibus sæculis etiam in pace observata, quæ nunc tantum in metu audiuntur." (*Hist.* i. 86)

² M. de Champagny has devoted an extremely beautiful chapter (*Les Antonins*, tome ii. pp. 179-200) to the liberty of the Roman Empire. See, too, the fifty-fourth chapter of Mr. Merivale's *History*. It is the custom of some of the apologists for modern Cæsarism to defend it by pointing to the Roman Empire as the happiest period in human history. No apology can be more unfortunate. The first task of a modern despot is to centralise to the highest point, to bring every department of thought and action under a system of police regulation, and, above all, to impose his shackling tyranny upon the human mind. The very perfection of the Roman Empire was, that the municipal and personal liberty it admitted had never been

³ Compare Milman's *History of Early Christianity* (1807), vol. ii. p. 188, and his *History of Latin Christianity* (1867), vol. i. pp. 26-29. There are only two cases of alleged martyrdom before this time that can excite any reasonable doubt. Irenæus distinctly asserts that Telesphorus was martyred, but his martyrdom is put in the beginning of the reign of Antoninus Pius (he had assumed the mitre near the end of the reign of Hadrian), and Antoninus is represented, by the general voice of the Church, as perfectly free from the stain of persecution. A tradition, which is in itself sufficiently probable, states that Pontianus, having been exiled by Maximinus, was killed in banishment.

true, had caused some volumes of forged prophecies to be burnt,¹ and, under the tyranny of Tiberius and Domitian, political writers and historians who eulogised tyrannicide, or vehemently opposed the Empire, were persecuted; but the extreme indignation these acts elicited attests their rarity, and, on matters unconnected with politics, the liberty of literature was absolute.² In a word, the Church proselytised in a society in which toleration was the rule, and at a time when municipal, provincial, and personal independence had reached the highest point, when the ruling classes were for the most part absolutely indifferent to religious opinions, and when an unprecedented concourse of influences facilitated its progress.

When we reflect that these were the circumstances of the Church till the middle of the third century, we may readily perceive the absurdity of main-

taining that Christianity was propagated in the face of such a fierce and continuous persecution that no opinions could have survived it without a miracle, or of arguing from the history of the early Church that persecution never has any real efficacy in suppressing truth. When, in addition to the circumstances under which it operated, we consider the unexampled means both of attraction and of intimidation that were possessed by the Church, we can have no difficulty in understanding that it should have acquired a magnitude that would enable it to defy the far more serious assaults it was still destined to endure. That it had acquired this extension we have abundant evidence. The language I have quoted from Lactantius is but a feeble echo of the emphatic statements of writers before the Decian persecution.³ "There is no race of men, whether Greek or barbarian," said Justin Martyr, "among whom prayers and thanks are not offered up in the name of the Crucified."⁴ "We are but of yesterday," cried Tertullian, "and we fill all your cities, islands, forts, councils, even the camps themselves, the tribes, the decuries, the palaces, the Senate, and the forum."⁵ Eusebius has preserved a letter of Cornelius, Bishop of Rome, containing a catalogue of the officers of his Church at the time of the Decian persecution. It consisted of one bishop, forty-six presbyters, seven deacons, seven sub-deacons, forty-two acolytes, fifty-two exorcists, readers, and janitors. The Church also supported more than fifteen hundred widows, and poor or suffering persons.⁶

The Decian persecution, which broke out in A.D. 249, and was probably begun in hopes of restoring the Empire to its ancient discipline, and eliminating from it all extraneous and unpatriotic influences,⁷ is the first example of a deliberate attempt, supported by the whole machinery of provincial government, and extending

surpassed, and the intellectual liberty had never been equalled

¹ Sueton. *Aug.* xxxi. It appears from a passage in Livy (xxxix. 16) that books of oracles had been sometimes burnt in the Republic.

² Tacitus has given us a very remarkable account of the trial of Cremutius Cordus, under Tiberius, for having published a history in which he had praised Brutus and called Cassius the last of Romans (*Annal.* iv. 34-35.) He expressly terms this "novo ac tunc primum auditio crimine," and he puts a speech in the mouth of the accused, describing the liberty previously accorded to writers. Cordus avoided execution by suicide. His daughter, Marcia, preserved some copies of his work, and published it in the reign and with the approbation of Caligula. (Senec. *Ad Marc.* i; Suet. *Calig.* 16.) There are, however, some traces of an earlier persecution of letters. Under the sanction of a law of the decemvirs against libellers, Augustus exiled the satiric writer Cassius Severus, and he also destroyed the works of an historian named Labienus, on account of their seditious sentiments. These writings were republished with those of Cordus. Generally, however, Augustus was very magnanimous in his dealings with his assailants. He refused the request of Tiberius to punish them (Suet. *Aug.* 51), and only excluded from his palace Timagenes, who bitterly satirised both him and the empress, and proclaimed himself everywhere the enemy of the emperor (Senec. *De Ira*, iii. 23.) A similar magnanimity was shown by most of the other emperors; among others, by Nero. (Suet. *Nero*, 39.) Under Vespasian, however, a poet named Maternus was obliged to retouch a tragedy on Cato (Tacit. *De Or.* 2-3), and Domitian allowed no writings opposed to his policy. (Tacit. *Agric.*) But no attempt appears to have been made in the Empire to control religious writings till the persecution of Diocletian, who ordered the Scriptures to be burnt. The example was speedily followed by the Christian emperors. The writings of Arius were burnt in A.D. 321, those of Porphyry in A.D. 388. Pope Gelasius, in A.D. 496, drew up a list of books which should not be read, and all liberty of publication speedily became extinct. See on this subject Peignot, *Essai historique sur la Liberté d'Ecrire*; Villemain, *Etudes de Littérature ancienne*; Sir C. Lewis on the *Credibility of Roman Hist.* vol. i. p. 52; Nadal, *Mémoire sur la liberté qu'avoient les soldats romains de dire des vers satyriques contre ceux qui triomphoient* (Paris, 1725).

³ See a collection of passages on this point in Pressensé, *Hist. des Trois premiers Siècles* (2^e série), tome i. pp. 3-4.

⁴ *Typho.*

⁵ *Apol.* xxxvii.

⁶ Euseb. vi. 43.

⁷ Eusebius, it is true, ascribes this persecution (vi. 39) to the hatred Decius bore to his predecessor Philip, who was very friendly to the Christians. But although such a motive might account for a persecution like that of Maximinus, which was directed chiefly against the bishops who had been about the Court of Severus, it is insufficient to account for a persecution so general and so severe as that of Decius. It is remarkable that this emperor is uniformly represented by the pagan historians as an eminently wise and humane sovereign. See Dodwell, *De Paucitate Martyrum*, li.

over the entire surface of the Empire, to extirpate Christianity from the world. It would be difficult to find language too strong to paint its horrors. The ferocious instincts of the populace, that were long repressed, burst out anew, and they were not only permitted, but encouraged by the rulers. Far worse than the deaths which menaced those who shrank from the idiotic sacrifices were the hideous and prolonged tortures by which the magistrates often sought to subdue the constancy of the martyr, the nameless outrages that were sometimes inflicted on the Christian virgin.¹ The Church, enervated by a long peace, and deeply infected with the vices of the age, tottered beneath the blow. It had long since arrived at the period when men were Christians, not by conviction, but through family relationship; when the more opulent Christians vied in luxury with the pagans among whom they mixed, and when even the bishops were, in many instances, worldly aspirants after civil offices. It is not, therefore, surprising that the defection was very large. The pagans marked with triumphant ridicule, and the Fathers with a burning indignation, the thousands who thronged to the altars at the very commencement of persecution, the sudden collapse of the most illustrious churches, the eagerness with which the offer of provincial governors to furnish certificates of apostasy, without exacting a compliance with the conditions which those certificates attested was accepted by multitudes.² The question whether those who abandoned the faith should afterwards be re-admitted to communion became the chief question that divided the Novatians, and one of the questions that divided the Montanists, from the Catholics, while the pretensions of the confessors to furnish

indulgences, remitting the penances imposed by the bishops, led to a conflict which contributed very largely to establish the undisputed ascendancy of the episcopacy. But the Decian persecution, though it exhibits the Church in a somewhat less noble attitude than the persecutions which preceded and which followed it, was adorned by many examples of extreme courage and devotion, displayed in not a few cases by those who were physically among the frailest of mankind. It was of a kind eminently fitted to crush the Church. Had it taken place at an earlier period, had it been continued for a long succession of years, Christianity, without a miracle, must have perished. But the Decian persecution fell upon a Church which had existed for two centuries, and it lasted less than two years.³ Its intensity varied much in different provinces. In Alexandria and the neighbouring towns, where a popular tumult had anticipated the menaces of the Government, it was extremely horrible.⁴ In Carthage, at first, the proconsul being absent, no capital sentence was passed, but on the arrival of that functionary the penalty of death, accompanied by dreadful tortures, was substituted for that of exile or imprisonment.⁵ The rage of the people was especially directed against the bishop, St. Cyprian, who prudently retired till the storm had passed.⁶ In general, it was observed

¹ "La persécution de Dèce ne dura qu'environ un an dans sa grande violence. Car S. Cyprien, dans les lettres écrites en 251, dès devant Pâques, et même dans quelques-unes écrites apparemment dès la fin de 250, témoigne que son église jouissait déjà de quelque paix, mais d'une paix encore peu affermie, en sorte que le moindre accident eût pu renouveler le trouble et la persécution. Il semble même que l'on n'eût pas encore la liberté d'y tenir les assemblées, et néanmoins il paraît que tous les confesseurs prisonniers à Carthage y avoient été mis en liberté dès ce temps-là." (Tillemont, *Mém. d'Hist. ecclésiastique*, tome III, p. 324.)

² Dionysius the bishop wrote a full account of it, which Eusebius has preserved (vi. 41-42). In Alexandria, Dionysius says, the persecution produced by popular fanaticism preceded the edict of Decius by an entire year. He has preserved a particular catalogue of all who were put to death in Alexandria during the entire Decian persecution. They were seventeen persons. Several of these were killed by the mob, and their deaths were in nearly all cases accompanied by circumstances of extreme atrocity. Besides these, others (we know not how many) had been put to torture. Many, Dionysius says, perished in other cities or villages of Egypt.

³ See St. Cyprian, *Ep. viii.*

⁴ There was much controversy at this time as to the propriety of bishops evading persecution by flight. The Montanists maintained that such conduct was equivalent to apostasy. Tertullian had written a book, *De Fuga in Persecutione*, maintaining this view; and among the orthodox the conduct of St. Cyprian (who afterwards nobly attested his courage by his death) did not escape animadversion. The more moderate opinion

¹ St. Cyprian (*Ep. viii.*) and, at a later period, St. Jerome (*Vit. Pauli*), both notice that during this persecution the desire of the persecutors was to subdue the constancy of the Christians by torture, without gratifying their desire for martyrdom. The consignment of Christian virgins to houses of ill fame was one of the most common incidents in the later acts of martyrs which were invented in the Middle Ages. Unhappily, however, it must be acknowledged that there are some undoubted traces of it at an earlier date. Tertullian, in a famous passage, speaks of the cry "Ad Leonem" as substituted for that of "Ad Leonem"; and St. Ambrose recounts some strange stories on this subject in his treatise *De Virginitate*.

² St. Cyprian has drawn a very highly coloured picture of this general corruption, and of the apostasy it produced, in his treatise *De lapsis*, a most interesting picture of the society of his time. See, too, the *Life of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus*, by Greg. of Nyssa.

that the object of the rulers was much less to slay than to vanquish the Christians. Horrible tortures were continually employed to extort an apostasy, and, when those tortures proved vain, great numbers were ultimately released.

The Decian persecution is remarkable in Christian archæology as being, it is believed, the first occasion in which the Christian catacombs were violated. Those vast subterranean corridors, lined with tombs and expanding very frequently into small chapels adorned with paintings, often of no mean beauty, had for a long period been an inviolable asylum in seasons of persecution. The extreme sanctity which the Romans were accustomed to attach to the place of burial repelled the profane, and as early, it is said, as the very beginning of the third century the catacombs were recognised as legal possessions of the Church.¹ The Roman legislators, however unfavourable to the formation of guilds or associations, made an exception in favour of burial societies, or associations of men subscribing a certain sum to ensure to each member a decent burial in ground which belonged to the corporation. The Church is believed to have availed itself of this privilege, and to have attained in this capacity a legal existence. The tombs, which were originally the properties of distinct families, became in this manner an ecclesiastical domain, and the catacombs were, from perhaps the first, made something more than places of burial.² The chapels with which they abound, and which are of the smallest dimensions and utterly unfit for general worship, were probably mortuary chapels, and may have also been employed in the services commemorating

prevailed, but the leading bishops found it necessary to support their conduct by declaring that they had received special revelations exhorting them to fly. St. Cyprian, who constantly appealed to his dreams to justify him in his controversies (see some curious instances collected in Middleton's *Free Enquiry*, pp. 101-105), declared (*Ep.* ix.), and his biographer and friend Pontius reasserted (*Vit. Cyprianus*), that his flight was "by the command of God." Dionysius, the Bishop of Alexandria, asserts the same thing of his own flight, and attests it by an oath (see his own words in Euseb. vi. 40); and the same thing was afterwards related of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus (See his *Life* by Gregory of Nyssa.)

¹ "E veramente che almeno fino dal secolo terzo i fedeli abbiano posseduto cimiteri a nome commune, e che il loro possesso sia stato riconosciuto dagli imperatori, è cosa impossibile a negare." (Rossi, *Roma Sotterranea*, tomo i. p. 103.)

² This is all fully discussed by Rossi, *Roma Sotterranea*, tome i. pp. 101-108. Rossi thinks the Church, in its capacity of burial society, was known by the name of "ecclesia fratrum."

the martyrs, while the ordinary worship was probably at first conducted in the private houses of the Christians. The decision of Alexander Severus, which I have already noticed, is the earliest notice we possess of the existence of buildings specially devoted to the Christian services; but we cannot tell how long before this time they may have existed in Rome.³ In serious persecution, however, they would doubtless have to be abandoned; and, as a last resort, the catacombs proved a refuge from the persecutors.

The reign of Decius only lasted about two years, and before its close the persecution had almost ceased.⁴ On the accession of his son Gallus, in the last month of A.D. 251, there was for a short time perfect peace; but Gallus resumed the persecution in the spring of the following year, and although apparently not very severe, or very general, it seems to have continued to his death, which took place a year after.⁵ Two Roman bishops, Cornelius, who had succeeded the martyred Fabianus, and his successor Lucius, were at this time put to death.⁶ Valerian, who ascended the throne A.D. 254, at first not only tolerated, but warmly patronised the Christians, and attracted so many to his Court that his house, in the language of a contemporary, appeared "the Church of the Lord."⁷ But after rather more than four years his disposition changed. At the persuasion, it is said, of an

¹ See, on the history of early Christian churches, Cave's *Primitive Christianity*, part i. c. vi.

² Dodwell (*De Paucis Martyr.* lvii.) has collected evidence of the subsidence of the persecution in the last year of the reign of Decius.

³ This persecution is not noticed by St. Jerome, Orosius, Sulpicius Severus, or Lactantius. The very little we know about it is derived from the letters of St. Cyprian, and from a short notice by Dionysius of Alexandria, in Eusebius, vii. 1. Dionysius says that Gallus began the persecution when his reign was advancing prosperously, and his affairs succeeding, which probably means, after he had procured the departure of the Goths from the Illyrian province, early in A.D. 252 (see Gibbon, chap. x.). The disastrous position into which affairs had been thrown by the defeat of Decius appears, at first, to have engrossed his attention.

⁴ Lucius was at first exiled and then permitted to return, on which occasion St. Cyprian wrote him a letter of congratulation (*Ep.* lvii.) He was, however, afterwards rearrested and slain, but it is not, I think, clear whether it was under Gallus or Valerian. St. Cyprian speaks (*Ep.* lxvi.) of both Cornelius and Lucius as martyred. The emperors were probably at this time beginning to realise the power the Bishops of Rome possessed. We know hardly anything of the Decian persecution at Rome except the execution of the bishop; and St. Cyprian says (*Ep.* li) that Decius would have preferred a pretender to the throne to a Bishop of Rome.

⁵ Dionysius, Archbishop of Alexandria; see Euseb. vii. 10.

Egyptian magician named Macrianus, he signed in A.D. 258 an edict of persecution, condemning Christian ecclesiastics and senators to death, and other Christians to exile, or to the forfeiture of their property, and prohibiting them from entering the catacombs.¹ A sanguinary and general persecution ensued. Among the victims were Sixtus, the Bishop of Rome, who perished in the catacombs,² and Cyprian, who was exiled, and afterwards beheaded, and was the first Bishop of Carthage who suffered martyrdom.³ At last, Valerian having been captured by the Persians, Gallienus, in A.D. 260, ascended the throne, and immediately proclaimed a perfect toleration of the Christians.⁴

The period from the accession of Decius in A.D. 249, to the accession of Gallienus in A.D. 260, which I have now very briefly noticed, was by far the most disastrous the Church had yet endured. With the exception of about five years in the reigns of Gallus and Valerian, the persecution was continuous, though it varied much in its intensity and its range. During the first portion, if measured, not by the number of deaths, but by the atrocity of the tortures inflicted, it was probably as severe as any upon record. It was subsequently directed chiefly against the leading clergy, and, as we have seen, four Roman bishops perished. In addition to the political reasons that inspired it, the popular fanaticism caused by great calamities, which were ascribed to anger of the gods at the neglect of their worship, had in this, as in former periods, a great influence. Political disasters, which foreshadowed clearly the approaching downfall of the Empire, were followed by fearful and general famines and plagues. St. Cyprian, in a treatise addressed to one of the persecutors who was most confident in ascribing these things to the Christians, presents us with an extremely curious picture, both of the general despondency that had fallen upon the Empire, and of the manner in which these calamities were regarded by the Christians. Like most of his co-religionists, the saint was convinced that the closing scene of the

earth was at hand. The decrepitude of the world, he said, had arrived, the forces of nature were almost exhausted, the sun had no longer its old lustre, or the soil its old fertility, the spring time had grown less lovely and the autumn less bounteous, the energy of man had decayed, and all things were moving rapidly to the end. Famines and plagues were the precursors of the day of judgment. They were sent to warn and punish a rebellious world, which, still bowing down before idols, persecuted the believers in the truth. "So true is this, that the Christians are never persecuted without the sky manifesting at once the Divine displeasure." The conception of a converted Empire never appears to have flashed across the mind of the saint;⁵ the only triumph he predicted for the Church was that of another world; and to the threats of the persecutors he rejoined by fearful menaces. "A burning, scorching fire will for ever torment those who are condemned; there will be no respite or end to their torments. We shall through eternity contemplate in their agonies those who for a short time contemplated us in tortures, and for the brief pleasure which the barbarity of our persecutors took in feasting their eyes upon an inhuman spectacle, they will be themselves exposed as an eternal spectacle of agony." As a last warning, calamity after calamity broke upon the world, and, with the solemnity of one on whom the shadow of death had already fallen, St. Cyprian adjured the persecutors to repent and to be saved.⁶

The accession of Gallienus introduced the Church to a new period of perfect peace, which, with a single inconsiderable exception, continued for no less than forty years. The exception was furnished by Aurelian, who during nearly the whole of his reign had been exceedingly favourable to the Christians, and had even been appealed to by the orthodox bishops, who desired him to expel from Antioch a prelate they had excommunicated for heresy,⁷ but who, at the close of his reign, intended to persecute. He was assassinated,

¹ Eusebius, vii. 10-12; Cyprian, *Ep.* lxxxi. Lactantius says of Valerian, "Multum quamvis brevi tempore justis sanguinis fudit." (*De Mort. Persec.* c. v.)

² Cyprian, *Ep.* lxxxi.

³ See his *Life* by the deacon Pontius, which is reproduced by Gibbon.

⁴ Eusebius, vii. 13.

⁵ Tertullian had before, in a curious passage, spoken of the impossibility of Christian Cæsars "Sed et Cæsares credidissent super Christo si aut Cæsares non essent seculo necessari, aut si et Christiani potuissent esse Cæsares." (*Apol.* xxi.)

⁶ *Contra Demetrianum.*

⁷ Eusebius, vii. 30. Aurelian decided that the cathedral at Antioch should be given up to whoever was appointed by the bishops of Italy.

however—according to one account, when he was just about to sign the decrees; according to another, before they had been sent through the provinces; and if any persecution actually took place, it was altogether inconsiderable.¹ Christianity during all this time was not only perfectly free, it was greatly honoured. Christians were appointed governors of the provinces, and were expressly exonerated from the duty of sacrificing. The bishops were treated by the civil authorities with profound respect. The palaces of the emperor were filled with Christian servants, who were authorised freely to profess their religion, and were greatly valued for their fidelity. The popular prejudice seems to have been lulled to rest; and it has been noticed that the rapid progress of the faith excited no tumult or hostility. Spacious churches were erected in every quarter, and they could scarcely contain the multitude of worshippers.² In Rome itself, before the outburst of the Diocletian persecution, there were no less than forty churches.³ The Christians may still have been outnumbered by the pagans; but when we consider their organisation, their zeal, and their rapid progress, a speedy triumph appeared inevitable.

But before that triumph was achieved a last and a terrific ordeal was to be undergone. Diocletian, whose name has been somewhat unjustly associated with a persecution the responsibility of which belongs far more to his colleague Galerius, having left the Christians in perfect peace for nearly eighteen years, suffered himself to be persuaded to make one more effort to eradicate the foreign creed. This emperor, who had risen by his merits from the humblest position, exhibited in all the other actions of his reign a moderate, placable, and conspicuously humane nature; and, although he greatly magnified the Imperial authority, the simplicity of his private life, his voluntary abdication, and, above all, his singularly noble conduct during many years of retirement, displayed a rare magnanimity of character. As a politician, he deserves, I think, to rank very high. Antoninus and Marcus Aurelius had been too fascinated by the traditions of the Republic,

and by the austere teaching and retrospective spirit of the Stoics, to realise the necessity of adapting institutions to the wants of a luxurious and highly-civilised people, and they, therefore, had little permanent influence upon the destinies of the Empire. But Diocletian invariably exhibited in his legislation a far-seeing and comprehensive mind, well aware of the condition of the society he ruled and provident of distant events. Perceiving that Roman corruption was incurable, he attempted to regenerate the Empire by creating new centres of political life in the great and comparatively unperturbed capitals of the provinces; and Nicomedia, which was his habitual residence, Carthage, Milan, and Ravenna, all received abundant tokens of his favour. He swept away or disregarded the obsolete and inefficient institutions of Republican liberty that still remained, and indeed gave his government a somewhat Oriental character; but, at the same time, by the bold and, it must be admitted, very perilous measure of dividing the Empire into four sections, he abridged the power of each ruler, ensured the better supervision and increased authority of the provinces, and devised the first effectual check to those military revolts which had for some time been threatening the Empire with anarchy. With the same energetic statesmanship, we find him reorganising the whole system of taxation, and attempting, less wisely, to regulate commercial transactions. To such an emperor the problem presented by the rapid progress and the profoundly anti-national character of Christianity must have been a matter of serious consideration, and the weaknesses of his character were most unfavourable to the Church; for Diocletian, with many noble qualities of heart and head, was yet superstitious, tortuous, nervous, and vacillating, and was too readily swayed by the rude and ferocious soldier who was impetuously inciting him against the Christians.

The extreme passion which Galerius displayed on this subject is ascribed, in the first instance, to the influence of his mother, who was ardently devoted to the pagan worship. He is himself painted in dark colours by the Christian writers as a man of boundless and unbridled sensuality, of an imperiousness that rose to fury at opposition, and of a cruelty which had long passed the stage of callousness, and become a fiendish delight in the

¹ Compare the accounts in Eusebius, vii. 30, and Lactantius, *De Mort.* c. vi.

² See the forcible and very candid description of Eusebius, viii. 1.

³ This is noticed by Optatus.

infliction and contemplation of suffering.¹ His strong attachment to paganism made him at length the avowed representative of his party, which several causes had contributed to strengthen. The philosophy of the Empire had by this time fully passed into its Neo-Platonic and Pythagorean phases, and was closely connected with religious observances. Hierocles and Porphyry, who were among its most eminent exponents, had both written books against Christianity, and the Oriental religions fostered much fanaticism among the people. Political interests united with superstition, for the Christians were now a very formidable body in the State. Their interests were supposed to be represented by the Cæsar Constantius Chlorus, and the religion was either adopted, or at least warmly favoured, by the wife and daughter of Diocletian (the latter of whom was married to Galerius²), and openly professed by some of the leading officials at the Court. A magnificent church crowned the hill facing the palace of the emperor at Nicomedia. The bishops were in most cities among the most active and influential citizens, and their influence was not always exercised for good. A few cases in which an ill-considered zeal led Christians to insult the pagan worship one or two instances of Christians refusing to serve in the army because they believed military life repugnant to their creed, a scandalous relaxation of morals that had arisen during the long peace, and the fierce and notorious discord displayed by the leaders of the Church, contributed in different ways to accelerate the persecution.³

For a considerable time Diocletian resisted all the urgency of Galerius against the Christians, and the only measure taken was the dismissal by the latter sovereign of a number of Christian officers from the army. In A.D. 303, however, Diocletian yielded to the entreaties of his colleague, and a fearful persecution, which many circumstances conspired to stimulate, began. The priests, in one of the public ceremonies, had declared that the presence of Christians prevented the entrails from showing the accustomed signs. The oracle of Apollo, at Miletus, being consulted by Diocletian,

exhorted him to persecute the Christians. A fanatical Christian, who avowed his deed, and expiated it by a fearful death, tore down the first edict of persecution, and replaced it by a bitter taunt against the emperor. Twice after the outburst of the persecution the palace at Nicomedia, where Diocletian and Galerius were residing, was set on fire, and the act was ascribed, not without probability, to a Christian hand, as were also some slight disturbances that afterwards arose in Syria.⁴ Edict after edict followed in rapid succession. The first ordered the destruction of all Christian churches and of all Bibles, menaced with death the Christians if they assembled in secret for Divine worship, and deprived them of all civil rights. A second edict ordered all ecclesiastics to be thrown into prison, while a third edict ordered that these prisoners, and a fourth edict that all Christians, should be compelled by torture to sacrifice. At first Diocletian refused to permit their lives to be taken, but after the fire at Nicomedia this restriction was removed. Many were burnt alive, and the tortures by which the persecutors sought to shake their resolution were so dreadful that even such a death seemed an act of mercy. The only province of the Empire where the Christians were at peace was Gaul, which had received its baptism of blood under Marcus Aurelius, but was now governed by Constantius Chlorus, who protected them from personal molestation, though he was compelled, in obedience to the emperor, to destroy their churches. In Spain, which was also under the government, but not under the direct inspection, of Constantius, the persecution was moderate, but in all other parts of the Empire it raged with fierceness till the abdication of Diocletian, in 305. This event also immediately restored peace to the Western provinces,⁵ but greatly aggravated the misfortunes of the Eastern Christians, who passed under the absolute rule of Galerius. Horrible, varied, and prolonged tortures were employed to quell their fortitude, and their final

¹ These incidents are noticed by Eusebius in his *History*, and in his *Life of Constantine*, and by Lactantius, *De Mort. Persec.*

² "Italy, Sicily, Gaul, and whatever parts extend towards the West—Spain, Mauritania, and Africa." (Euseb. *Mart. Palest.* ch. xiii.) But in Gaul, as I have said, the persecution had not extended beyond the destruction of churches; in these provinces the persecution, Eusebius says, lasted not quite two years.

³ See the vivid pictures in Lact. *De Mort. Persec.*

⁴ Lactant. *De Mort. Persec.* 15.

⁵ Eusebius, viii.

resistance was crowned by the most dreadful of all deaths, roasting over a slow fire. It was not till A.D. 311, eight years after the commencement of the general persecution, ten years after the first measure against the Christians, that the Eastern persecution ceased. Galerius, the arch-enemy of the Christians, was struck down by a fearful disease. His body, it is said, became a mass of loathsome and foetid sores—a living corpse, devoured by countless worms, and exhaling the odour of the charnel-house. He who had shed so much innocent blood shrank himself from a Roman death. In his extreme anguish he appealed in turn to physician after physician, and to temple after temple. At last he relented towards the Christians. He issued a proclamation restoring them to liberty, permitting them to rebuild their churches, and asking their prayers for his recovery.¹ The era of persecution now closed. One brief spasm, indeed, due to the Cæsar Maximian, shot through the long-afflicted Church of Asia Minor,² but it was rapidly allayed. The accession of Constantine, the proclamation of Milan, A.D. 313, the defeat of Licinius, and the conversion of the conqueror speedily followed, and Christianity became the religion of the Empire.

Such, so far as we can trace it, is the outline of the last and most terrible persecution inflicted on the early Church. Unfortunately, we can place little reliance on any information we possess about the number of its victims, the provocations that produced it, or the objects of its authors. The ecclesiastical account of these matters is absolutely unchecked by any pagan statement, and it is derived almost exclusively from the history of Eusebius, and from the treatise *On the Deaths of the Persecutors*, which is ascribed to Lactantius. Eusebius was a writer of great learning and of critical abilities not below the very low level of his time, and he had personal knowledge of some of the events in Palestine which he has recorded, but he had no preten-

sions whatever to impartiality. He has frankly told us that his principle in writing history was to conceal the facts that were injurious to the reputation of the Church;³ and, although his practice was sometimes better than his principle, the portrait he has drawn of the saintly virtues of his patron Constantine, which we are able to correct from other sources, abundantly proves with how little scruple the courtly bishop could stray into the paths of fiction. The treatise of Lactantius, which has been well termed "a party pamphlet," is much more untrustworthy. It is a hymn of exultation over the disastrous ends of the persecutors, and especially of Galerius, written in a strain of the fiercest and most passionate invective, and bearing on every page unequivocal signs of inaccuracy and exaggeration. The whole history of the early persecution was soon enveloped in a thick cloud of falsehood. A notion, derived from prophecy, that ten great persecutions must precede the day of judgment, at an early period stimulated the imagination of the Christians, who believed that day to be imminent; and it was natural that, as time rolled on, men should magnify the sufferings that had been endured, and that in credulous and uncritical ages a single real incident should be often multiplied, diversified, and exaggerated in many distinct narratives. Monstrous fictions, such as the crucifixion of ten thousand Christians upon Mount Ararat under Trajan, the letter of Tiberianus to Trajan, complaining that he was weary of ceaselessly killing Christians in Palestine, and the Theban legion of six thousand men, said to have been massacred by Maximilian, were boldly propagated and readily believed.⁴ The virtue supposed to attach to the bones of martyrs, and the custom—and, after a decree of the second Council of Nice, in the eighth

¹ See two passages, which Gibbon justly calls remarkable. (*H. E.* viii. 2; *Martyrs of Palest.* ch. xii.)

² There is one instance of a wholesale massacre which appears to rest on good authority. Eusebius asserts that, during the Diocletian persecution, a village in Phrygia, the name of which he does not mention, being inhabited entirely by Christians who refused to sacrifice, was attacked and burnt with all that were in it by the pagan soldiery. Lactantius (*Inst. Div.* v. 11) confines the conflagration to a church in which the entire population was burnt; and an early Latin translation of Eusebius states that the people were first summoned to withdraw, but refused to do so. Gibbon (ch. xvi.) thinks that this tragedy took place when the decree of Diocletian ordered the destruction of the churches.

³ The history of this persecution is given by Eusebius, *Hist. lib. viii.*, in his work on the *Martyrs of Palestine*, and in Lactantius, *De Mort. Persec.* The persecution in Palestine was not quite continuous; in A.D. 308 it had almost ceased; it then revived fiercely, but at the close of A.D. 309, and in the beginning of A.D. 310, there was again a short lull, apparently due to political causes. See Mosheim, *Eccles. Hist.* (edited by Soames), vol. i. pp. 286-287.

⁴ Eusebius.

century, the obligation—of placing saintly remains under every altar, led to an immense multiplication of spurious relics, and a corresponding demand for legends. Almost every hamlet soon required a patron martyr and a local legend, which the nearest monastery was usually ready to supply. The monks occupied their time in composing and disseminating innumerable acts of martyrs, which purported to be strictly historical, but which were, in fact, deliberate, though it was thought edifying, forgeries; and pictures of hideous tortures, enlivened by fantastic miracles, soon became the favourite popular literature. To discriminate accurately the genuine acts of martyrs from the immense mass that were fabricated by the monks has been attempted by Ruinart, but is perhaps impossible. Modern criticism has, however, done much to reduce the ancient persecutions to their true dimensions. The famous essay of Dodwell, which appeared towards the close of the seventeenth century, though written, I think, a little in the spirit of a special pleader, and not free from its own exaggerations, has had a great and abiding influence upon ecclesiastical history, and the still more famous chapter which Gibbon devoted to the subject rendered the conclusions of Dodwell familiar to the world.

Notwithstanding the great knowledge and critical acumen displayed in this chapter, few persons, I imagine, can rise from its perusal without a feeling both of repulsion and dissatisfaction. The complete absence of all sympathy with the heroic courage manifested by the martyrs, and the frigid, and in truth most unphilosophical, severity with which the historian has weighed the words and actions of men engaged in the agonies of a deadly struggle, must repel every generous nature; while the persistence with which he estimates persecutions by the number of deaths rather than by the amount of suffering diverts the mind from the really distinctive atrocities of the pagan persecutions. He has observed that, while the anger of the persecutors was at all times especially directed against the bishops, we know from Eusebius that only nine bishops were put to death in the entire Diocletian persecution, and that the particular enumeration, which the historian made on the spot, of all the martyrs who perished during this persecution, in Palestine—which was under the government of

Galerius, and was, therefore, exposed to the full fury of the storm—shows the entire number to have been ninety-two. Starting from this fact, Gibbon, by a well-known process of calculation, has estimated the probable number of martyrs in the whole Empire during the Diocletian persecution at about two thousand, which happens to be the number of persons burnt by the Spanish Inquisition during the presidency of Torquemada alone,¹ and about one twenty-fifth of the number who are said to have suffered for their religion in the Netherlands in the reign of Charles V.² But although, if measured by the number of martyrs, the persecutions inflicted by pagans were less terrible than those inflicted by Christians, there is one aspect in which the former appear by far the more atrocious, and a truthful historian should suffer no false delicacy to prevent him from unflinchingly stating it. The conduct of the provincial governors, even when they were compelled by the Imperial edicts to persecute, was often conspicuously merciful. The Christian records contain several examples of rulers who refused to search out the Christians, who discountenanced or even punished their accusers, who suggested ingenious evasions of the law, who tried by earnest and patient kindness to overcome what they regarded as insane obstinacy, and who, when their efforts had proved vain, mitigated by their own authority the sentence they were compelled to pronounce. It was only on very rare occasions that any except conspicuous leaders of the Church, and sometimes persons of a servile condition, were in danger; the time that was conceded them before their trials gave them great facilities for escaping, and, even when condemned, Christian women had usually full permission to visit them in their prisons, and to console them by their charity. But, on the other hand, Christian writings which it is impossible to dispute continually record

¹ Mariana (*De Rebus Hispaniæ*, xxiv. 17). Llorente thought this single year 1482; but the expressions of Mariana, though he speaks of "this beginning," do not necessarily imply this restriction. Besides these martyrs, 17,000 persons in Spain recanted, and endured punishments less than death, while great numbers fled. There does not appear to have been, in this case, either the provocation or the political danger which stimulated the Diocletian persecution.

² This is according to the calculation of Sarpi. Grotius estimates the victims at 100,000. (Gibbon, ch. xvi.)

barbarities inflicted upon converts so ghastly and so hideous that the worst horrors of the Inquisition pale before them. It is, indeed, true that burning heretics by a slow fire was one of the accomplishments of the Inquisitors, and that they were among the most consummate masters of torture of their age. It is true that in one Catholic country they introduced the atrocious custom of making the spectacle of men burnt alive for their religious opinions an element in the public festivities.¹ It is true, too, that the immense majority of the acts of the martyrs are the transparent forgeries of lying monks; but it is also true that among the authentic records of pagan persecutions there are histories which display, perhaps more vividly than any other, both the depth of cruelty to which human nature may sink and the heroism of resistance it may attain. There was a time when it was the just boast of the Romans that no refinements of cruelty, no prolongations of torture, were admitted in their stern but simple penal code. But all this was changed. Those hateful games, which made the spectacle of human suffering and death the delight of all classes, had spread their brutalising influence wherever the Roman name was known, had rendered millions absolutely indifferent to the sight of human suffering, had produced in many, in the very centre of an advanced civilisation, a relish

and a passion for torture, a rapture and an exultation in watching the spasms of extreme agony, such as an African or an American savage alone can equal. The most horrible recorded instances of torture were usually inflicted either by the populace, or in their presence, in the arena.² We read of Christians bound in chairs of red-hot iron, while the stench of their half-consumed flesh rose in a suffocating cloud to heaven; of others who were torn to the very bone by shells or hooks of iron; of holy virgins given over to the lust of the gladiator or to the mercies of the pander; of two hundred and twenty-seven converts sent on one occasion to the mines, each with the sinews of one leg severed by a red-hot iron, and with an eye scooped from its socket; of fires so slow that the victims writhed for hours in their agonies; of bodies torn limb from limb, or sprinkled with burning lead; of mingled salt and vinegar poured over the flesh that was bleeding from the rack; of tortures prolonged and varied through entire days. For the love of their Divine Master, for the cause they believed to be true, men, and even weak girls, endured these things without flinching, when one word would have freed them from their sufferings. No opinion we may form of the proceedings of priests in a later age should impair the reverence with which we bend before the martyr's tomb.

¹ See some curious information on this in Ticknor's *Hist. of Spanish Literature* (3rd American edition), vol. iii pp. 236-237.

² This was the case in the persecutions at Lyons and Smyrna, under Marcus Aurelius. In the Diocletian persecution at Alexandria the populace were allowed to torture the Christians as they pleased. (*Eusebius*, viii. 10.)

HISTORY
OF
EUROPEAN MORALS

FROM AUGUSTUS TO CHARLEMAGNE

BY
WILLIAM EDWARD HARTPOLE LECKY

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HISTORY OF EUROPEAN MORALS

PART II

CHAPTER IV.

FROM CONSTANTINE TO CHARLEMAGNE

HAVING in the last chapter given a brief, but I trust not altogether indistinct, account of the causes that ensured the triumph of Christianity in Rome, and of the character of the opposition it overcame, I proceed to examine the nature of the moral ideal the new religion introduced, and also the methods by which it attempted to realise it. And at the very outset of this enquiry it is necessary to guard against a serious error. It is common with many persons to establish a comparison between Christianity and paganism, by placing the teaching of the Christians in juxtaposition with corresponding passages from the writings of Marcus Aurelius or Seneca, and to regard the superiority of the Christian over the philosophical teaching as a complete measure of the moral advance that was effected by Christianity. But a moment's reflection is sufficient to display the injustice of such a conclusion. The ethics of paganism were part of a philosophy. The ethics of Christianity were part of a religion. The first were the speculations of a few highly cultivated individuals, and neither had nor could have had any direct influence upon the masses of mankind. The second were indissolubly connected with the worship, hopes, and fears of a vast religious system, that acts at least as powerfully on the most ignorant as on the most educated. The chief objects of pagan religions were to foretell the future, to explain the universe, to avert calamity, to obtain the assistance of the gods. They contained no instru-

ments of moral teaching analogous to our institution of preaching, or to the moral preparation for the reception of the sacrament, or to confession, or to the reading of the Bible, or to religious education, or to united prayer for spiritual benefits. To make men virtuous was no more the function of the priest than of the physician. On the other hand, the philosophic expositions of duty were wholly unconnected with the religious ceremonies of the temple. To amalgamate these two spheres, to incorporate moral culture with religion, and thus to enlist in behalf of the former that desire to enter, by means of ceremonial observances, into direct communication with Heaven, which experience has shown to be one of the most universal and powerful passions of mankind, was among the most important achievements of Christianity. Something had, no doubt, been already attempted in this direction. Philosophy, in the hands of the rhetoricians, had become more popular. The Pythagoreans enjoined religious ceremonies for the purpose of purifying the mind, and expiatory rites were common, especially in the Oriental religions. But it was the distinguishing characteristic of Christianity that its moral influence was not indirect, casual, remote, or spasmodic. Unlike all pagan religions, it made moral teaching a main function of its clergy, moral discipline the leading object of its services, moral dispositions the necessary condition of the due performance of its rites. By the pulpit, by

its ceremonies, by all the agencies of power it possessed, it laboured systematically and perseveringly for the regeneration of mankind. Under its influence doctrines concerning the nature of God, the immortality of the soul, and the duties of man, which the noblest intellects of antiquity could barely grasp, have become the truisms of the village school, the proverbs of the cottage and of the alley.

But neither the beauty of its sacred writings, nor the perfection of its religious services, could have achieved this great result without the introduction of new motives to virtue. These may be either interested or disinterested, and in both spheres the influence of Christianity was very great. In the first, it effected a complete revolution by its teaching concerning the future world and concerning the nature of sin. The doctrine of a future life was far too vague among the pagans to exercise any powerful general influence, and among the philosophers who clung to it most ardently it was regarded solely in the light of a consolation. Christianity made it a deterrent influence of the strongest kind. In addition to the doctrines of eternal suffering, and the lost condition of the human race, and the notion of a minute personal retribution must be regarded as profoundly original. That the commission of great crimes, or the omission of great duties, may be expiated hereafter, was indeed an idea familiar to the pagans, though it exercised little influence over their lives, and seldom or never produced, even in the case of the worst criminals, those scenes of deathbed repentance which are so conspicuous in Christian biographies. But the Christian notion of the enormity of little sins, the belief that all the details of life will be scrutinised hereafter, that weaknesses of character and petty infractions of duty, of which the historian and the biographer take no note, which have no perceptible influence upon society, and which scarcely elicit a comment among mankind, may be made the grounds of eternal condemnation beyond the grave, was altogether unknown to the ancients, and, at a time when it possessed all the freshness of novelty, it was well fitted to transform the character. The eye of the pagan philosopher was ever fixed upon virtue, the eye of the Christian teacher upon sin. The first sought to amend men by extolling the

beauty of holiness; the second by awakening the sentiment of remorse. Each method had its excellences and its defects. Philosophy was admirably fitted to dignify and ennoble, but altogether impotent to regenerate, mankind. It did much to encourage virtue, but little or nothing to restrain vice. A relish or taste for virtue was formed and cultivated, which attracted many to its practice; but in this, as in the case of all our other higher tastes, a nature that was once thoroughly vitiated became altogether incapable of appreciating it, and the transformation of such a nature, which was continually effected by Christianity, was confessedly beyond the power of philosophy.¹ Experience has abundantly shown that men who are wholly insensible to the beauty and dignity of virtue can be convulsed by the fear of judgment, can be even awakened to such a genuine remorse for sin as to reverse the current of their dispositions, detach them from the most inveterate habits, and renew the whole tenour of their lives.

But the habit of dilating chiefly on the darker side of human nature, while it has contributed much to the regenerating efficacy of Christian teaching, has not been without its disadvantages. Habitually measuring character by its aberrations, theologians, in their estimates of those strong and passionate natures in which great virtues are balanced by great failings, have usually fallen into a signal injustice, which is the more inexcusable because in their own writings the Psalms of David are a conspicuous proof of what a noble, tender, and passionate nature could survive, even in an adulterer and a murderer. Partly, too, through this habit of operating through the sense of sin, and partly from a desire to show that man is in an abnormal and dislocated condition, they have continually propounded distorted and degrading views of human nature, have represented it as altogether under the empire of evil, and have sometimes risen to such a height of extravagance as to pronounce the very virtues of the heathen to be of the nature of sin. But nothing can be more certain than that that which is exceptional and distinctive in human nature is not its vice, but its excellence. It is not the sensuality,

¹ There is a remarkable passage of Celsus, on the impossibility of restoring a nature once thoroughly depraved, quoted by Origen in his answer to him.

cruelty, selfishness, passion, or envy, which are all displayed in equal or greater degrees in different departments of the animal world; it is that moral nature which enables man, apparently alone of all created beings, to classify his emotions, to oppose the current of his desires, and to aspire after moral perfection. Nor is it less certain that in civilised, and therefore developed man, the good greatly preponderates over the evil. Benevolence is more common than cruelty; the sight of suffering more readily produces pity than joy; gratitude, not ingratitude, is the normal result of a conferred benefit. The sympathies of man naturally follow heroism and goodness, and vice itself is usually but an exaggeration or distortion of tendencies that are in their own nature perfectly innocent.

But these exaggerations of human depravity, which have attained their extreme limits in some Protestant sects, do not appear in the Church of the first three centuries. The sense of sin was not yet accompanied by a denial of the goodness that exists in man. Christianity was regarded rather as a redemption from error than from sin,¹ and it is a significant fact that the epithet "well deserving," which the pagans usually put upon their tombs, was also the favourite inscription in the Christian catacombs. The Pelagian controversy, the teaching of St. Augustine, and the progress of asceticism, gradually introduced the doctrine of the utter depravity of man, which has proved in later times the fertile source of degrading superstition.

In sustaining and defining the notion of sin the early Church employed the machinery of an elaborate legislation. Constant communion with the Church was regarded as of the very highest importance. Participation in the sacrament was believed to be essential to eternal life. At a very early period it was given to infants; and already, in the time of St. Cyprian, we find the practice universal in the Church, and pronounced by at least some of the Fathers to be ordinarily necessary to their salvation.² Among the

adults it was customary to receive the sacrament daily, in some churches four times a week.¹ Even in the days of persecution the only part of their service the Christians consented to omit was the half-secular agape.² The clergy had power to accord or withhold access to the ceremonies, and the reverence with which they were regarded was so great that they were able to dictate their own conditions of communion.

From these circumstances there very naturally arose a vast system of moral discipline. It was always acknowledged that men could only rightly approach the sacred table in certain moral dispositions, and it was very soon added that the commission of crimes should be expiated by a period of penance before access to the communion was granted. A multitude of offences, of very various degrees of magnitude, such as prolonged abstinence from religious services, pre-nuptial unchastity, prostitution, adultery, the adoption of the profession of gladiator or actor, idolatry, the betrayal of Christians to persecutors, and pederastia, or unnatural love, were specified, to each of which a definite spiritual penalty was annexed. The lowest penalty consisted of deprivation of the eucharist for a few weeks. More serious offenders were deprived of it for a year, or for ten years, or until the hour of death, while in some cases the sentence amounted to the greater excommunication, or the deprivation of the eucharist for ever. During the period of penance the penitent was compelled to abstain from the marriage-bed, and from all other pleasures, and to spend his time chiefly in religious exercises. Before he was readmitted to communion he was accustomed publicly, before the assembled Christians, to appear clad in sackcloth, with ashes strewn upon his head, with his hair shaven off, and thus to throw himself at the feet of the minister, to confess aloud his sins and to implore the favour of absolution. The excommunicated man was not only cut off for ever from the Christian rites; he was severed

¹ This is well shown by Pressensé in his *Hist. des Trois premiers Siècles*.

² See a great deal of information on this subject in Bingham's *Antiquities of the Christian Church* (Oxford, 1853), vol. v. pp. 370-378. It is curious that those very noisy contemporary divines who profess to resuscitate the manners of the primitive Church, and who lay so much stress on the minutest ceremonial observances, have left unpractised what was un-

doubtedly one of the most universal, and was believed to be one of the most important, of the institutions of early Christianity. Bingham shows that the administration of the eucharist to infants continued in France till the twelfth century.

¹ See Cave's *Primitive Christianity*, part i ch. xi. At first the sacrament was usually received every day; but this custom soon declined in the Eastern Church, and at last passed away in the West.

² Plin. *Ep.* x. 97.

also from all intercourse with his former friends. No Christian, on pain of being himself excommunicated, might eat with him or speak with him. He must live hated and alone in this world, and be prepared for damnation in the next.¹

This system of legislation, resting upon religious terrorism, forms one of the most important parts of early ecclesiastical history, and a leading object of the Councils was to develop or modify it. Although confession was not yet an habitual and universally obligatory rite, although it was only exacted in cases of notorious sins, it is manifest that we have in this system, not potentially or in germ, but in full-developed activity, an ecclesiastical despotism of the most crushing order. But although this recognition of the right of the clergy to withhold from men what was believed to be essential to their salvation laid the foundation of the worst superstitions of Rome, it had, on the other hand, a very valuable moral effect. Every system of law is a system of education, for it fixes in the minds of men certain conceptions of right and wrong, and of the proportionate enormity of different crimes; and no legislation was enforced with more solemnity, or appealed more directly to the religious feelings, than the penitential discipline of the Church. More than, perhaps, any other single agency it confirmed that conviction of the enormity of sin, and of the retribution that follows it, which was one of the two great levers by which Christianity acted upon mankind.

But if Christianity was remarkable for its appeals to the selfish or interested side of our nature, it was far more remarkable for the empire it attained over disinterested enthusiasm. The Platonist exhorted men to imitate God; the Stoic, to follow reason; the Christian, to the love of Christ. The later Stoics had often united their notions of excellence in an ideal sage, and Epictetus had even urged his disciples to set before them some man of surpassing excellence, and to imagine him continually near them; but the utmost the Stoic ideal could become was a model for imitation, and the admiration it inspired could never deepen into affec-

tion. It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice; and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists. This has indeed been the well-spring of whatever is best and purest in the Christian life. Amid all the sins and failings, amid all the priestcraft and persecution and fanaticism that have defaced the Church, it has preserved, in the character and example of its Founder, an enduring principle of regeneration. Perfect love knows no rights. It creates a boundless, uncalculating self-abnegation that transforms the character, and is the parent of every virtue. Side by side with the terrorism and the superstitions of dogmatism, there have ever existed in Christianity those who would echo the wish of St. Theresa, that she could blot out both heaven and hell to serve God for Himself alone; and the power of the love of Christ has been displayed alike in the most heroic pages of Christian martyrdom, in the most pathetic pages of Christian resignation, and in the tenderest pages of Christian charity. It was shown by the martyrs who sank beneath the fangs of wild beasts, extending to the last moment their arms in the form of the cross they loved,² who ordered their chains to be buried with them as the insignia of their warfare;³ who looked with joy upon their ghastly wounds, because they had been received for Christ;⁴ who welcomed death as the bridegroom welcomes the bride, because

¹ Eusebius, *H. E.* viii. 7.

² St. Chrysostom tells this of St. Babylas. See Tillemont, *Mém. pour servir à l'Hist. ecclésiastique*, tome iii. p. 403.

³ In the preface to a very ancient Milanese missal it is said of St. Agatha that as she lay in the prison cell, torn by the instruments of torture, St. Peter came to her in the form of a Christian physician, and offered to dress her wounds; but she refused, saying that she wished for no physician but Christ. St. Peter, in the name of that Celestial Physician, commanded her wounds to close, and her body became whole as before. (Tillemont, tome iii. p. 412.)

⁴ The whole subject of the penitential discipline is treated minutely in Marshall's *Penitential Discipline of the Primitive Church* (first published in 1714, and reprinted in the library of Anglo-Catholic Theology), and also in Bingham, vol. vii. Tertullian gives a graphic description of the public penances, *De Pudicit.* v. 23.

it would bring them near to him. St. Felicitas was seized with the pangs of childbirth as she lay in prison awaiting the hour of martyrdom, and as her sufferings extorted from her a cry, one who stood by said: "If you now suffer so much, what will it be when you are thrown to wild beasts?" "What I now suffer," she answered, "concerns myself alone; but then another will suffer for me, for I will then suffer for him."¹ When St. Melania had lost both her husband and her two sons, kneeling by the bed where the remains of those she loved were laid, the childless widow exclaimed: "Lord, I shall serve Thee more humbly and readily by being eased of the weight Thou hast taken from me."²

Christian virtue was described by St. Augustine as "the order of love."³ Those who know how imperfectly the simple sense of duty can with most men resist the energy of the passions; who have observed how barren Mahomedanism has been in all the higher and more tender virtues, because its noble morality and its pure theism have been united with no living example, who, above all, have traced through the history of the Christian Church the influence of the love of Christ, will be at no loss to estimate the value of this purest and most distinctive source of Christian enthusiasm. In one respect we can scarcely realise its effects upon the early Church. The sense of the fixity of natural laws is now so deeply implanted in the minds of men that no truly educated person, whatever may be his religious opinions, seriously believes that all the more startling phenomena around him—storms, earthquakes, invasions, or famines—are results of isolated acts of supernatural power, and are intended to affect some human interest. But by the early Christians all these things were directly traced to the Master they so dearly loved. The result of this conviction was a state of feeling we can now barely understand. A great poet, in lines which are among the noblest in English literature, has spoken of one who had died as united to the all-pervading soul of nature, the grandeur and the tenderness, the beauty and the passion of his being blending with the kindred elements of the

universe, his voice heard in all its melodies, his spirit a presence to be felt and known, a part of the one plastic energy that permeates and animates the globe. Something of this kind, but of a far more vivid and real character, was the belief of the early Christian world. The universe to them was transfigured by love. All its phenomena, all its catastrophes, were read in a new light, were endued with a new significance, acquired a religious sanctity. Christianity offered a deeper consolation than any prospect of endless life or of millennial glories. It taught the weary, the sorrowing, and the lonely to look up to heaven and to say, "Thou, God, carest for me."

It is not surprising that a religious system which made it a main object to inculcate moral excellence, and which, by its doctrine of future retribution, by its organisation, and by its capacity of producing a disinterested enthusiasm, acquired an unexampled supremacy over the human mind, should have raised its disciples to a very high condition of sanctity. There can, indeed, be little doubt that, for nearly two hundred years after its establishment in Europe, the Christian community exhibited a moral purity which, if it has been equalled, has never for any long period been surpassed. Completely separated from the Roman world that was around them, abstaining alike from political life, from appeals to the tribunals, and from military occupations; looking forward continually to the immediate advent of their Master and the destruction of the Empire in which they dwelt, and animated by all the fervour of a young religion, the Christians found within themselves a whole order of ideas and feelings sufficiently powerful to guard them from the contamination of their age. In their general bearing towards society, and in the nature and minuteness of their scruples, they probably bore a greater resemblance to the Quakers than to any other existing sect.⁴ Some serious signs

¹ Besides the obvious points of resemblance in the common, though not universal, belief that Christians should abstain from all weapons and from all oaths, the whole teaching of the early Christians about the duty of simplicity, and the wickedness of ornaments in dress (see especially the writings of Tertullian, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Chrysostom, on this subject), is exceedingly like that of the Quakers. The scruple of Tertullian (*De Corona*) about Christians wearing laurel wreaths in the festivals, because laurel was called after Daphne, the lover of Apollo, was much of the same kind as that which led the Quakers to refuse to speak of Tuesday or Wednesday, lest they should recognise

² See her acts in Ruinart.

³ St. Jerome, *Ep.* xxxix.

⁴ "Definitio brevis et vera virtutis: ordo est amoris." (*De Civ. Dei*, xv. 22.)

of moral decadence might, indeed, be detected even before the Decian persecution; and it was obvious that the triumph of the Church, by introducing numerous nominal Christians into its pale, by exposing it to the temptations of wealth and prosperity, and by forcing it into connection with secular politics, must have damped its zeal and impaired its purity; yet few persons, I think, who had contemplated Christianity as it existed in the first three centuries would have imagined it possible that it should completely supersede the pagan worship around it; that its teachers should bend the mightiest monarchs to their will, and stamp their influence on every page of legislation, and direct the whole course of civilisation for a thousand years; and yet that the period in which they were so supreme should have been one of the most contemptible in history.

The leading features of that period may be shortly told. From the death of Marcus Aurelius, about which time Christianity assumed an important influence in the Roman world, the decadence of the Empire was rapid and almost uninterrupted. The first Christian emperor transferred his capital to a new city, uncontaminated by the traditions and the glories of paganism; and he there founded an Empire which derived all its ethics from Christian sources, and which continued in existence for about eleven hundred years. Of that Empire it can only be said that it represents one of the least noble forms that civilisation has yet assumed. Though very cruel and very sensual, there have been times when cruelty assumed more ruthless, and sensuality more extravagant, aspects; but there has been no other enduring civilisation so destitute of all the elements of greatness. The Byzantine Empire was pre-eminently the age of treachery. Its vices were the vices of men who had ceased to be brave without learning to be virtuous. Without patriotism, without the fruition or desire of liberty, after the first paroxysms of religious agitation without genius or intellectual activity; slaves, and willing slaves, in both their actions and their thoughts, immersed in sensuality and in the most frivolous pleasures, the people only emerged from their listlessness when

some theological subtlety, or some rivalry in the chariot races, stimulated them into frantic riots. They exhibited all the externals of advanced civilisation. They possessed knowledge; they had continually before them the noble literature of ancient Greece, instinct with the loftiest heroism; but that literature, which afterwards did so much to revivify Europe, could fire the degenerate Greeks with no spark or semblance of nobility. For long centuries the history of the Empire is a monotonous story of the intrigues of priests, eunuchs, and women, of perpetual crimes and conspiracies encircling the throne.¹ After the conversion of Constantine there was no prince in any section of the Roman Empire altogether so depraved, or at least so shameless, as Nero or Heliogabalus; but the Byzantine Empire can show none bearing the faintest resemblance to Antonine or Marcus Aurelius, while the nearest approximation to that character at Rome was furnished by the Emperor Julian, who contemptuously abandoned the Christian faith. At last the Mahomedan invasion terminated the long decrepitude of the Eastern Empire. Constantinople sank beneath the Crescent, its inhabitants wrangling about theological differences to the very moment of their fall.

The Asiatic Churches had already perished. The Christian faith, planted in the dissolute cities of Asia Minor, had produced many fanatical ascetics and a few illustrious theologians, but it had no renovating effect upon the people at large. It introduced among them a principle of interminable and implacable dissension, but it scarcely tempered in any appreciable degree their luxury or their sensuality. The frenzy of pleasure continued unabated, and in a great part of the Empire it seemed, indeed, only to have attained its climax after the triumph of Christianity.

The condition of the Western Empire was somewhat different. Not quite a century after the conversion of Constantine the Imperial city was captured by

the gods Tuesco or Woden. On the other hand, the ecclesiastical aspects and the sacramental doctrines of the Church were the extreme opposites of Quakerism.

¹ "On a calculé que sur 109 empereurs byzantins qui régnèrent seuls ou en association, d'Arcadius à Constantin Dragatzés, 34 seulement moururent dans leur lit impérial et 8 à la guerre ou par accident. En revanche on en compte 12 qui de gré ou de force abdiquèrent, 12 qui finirent au couvent ou en prison, 3 qu'on fit périr de faim, 18 qui furent empoisonnés, eurent les yeux crevés, 20 qui furent mutilés ou qui eurent les yeux crevés, 20 qui furent étouffés, étranglés, poignardés, précipités d'une colonne." (A. Rambaud, *Rev. des Deux Mondes*, Jan., 1891, p. 150.)

Alaric, and a long series of barbarian invasions at last dissolved the whole framework of Roman society, while, the barbarians themselves having adopted the Christian faith and submitted absolutely to the Christian priests, the Church, which remained the guardian of all the treasures of antiquity, was left with a virgin soil to realise her ideal of human excellence. Nor did she fall short of what might have been expected. She exercised for many centuries an almost absolute empire over the thoughts and actions of mankind, and created a civilisation which was permeated in every part with ecclesiastical influence. And the Dark Ages, as the period of Catholic ascendancy is justly called, do undoubtedly display many features of great and genuine excellence. In active benevolence, in the spirit of reverence, in loyalty, in co-operative habits, they far transcend the noblest ages of pagan antiquity, while in that humanity which shrinks from the infliction of suffering they were superior to Roman, and in their respect for chastity to Greek civilisation. On the other hand, they rank immeasurably below the best pagan civilisations in civic and patriotic virtues, in the love of liberty, in the number and splendour of the great characters they produced, in the dignity and beauty of the type of character they formed. They had their full share of tumult, anarchy, injustice, and war, and they should probably be placed, in all intellectual virtues, lower than any other period in the history of mankind. A boundless intolerance of all divergence of opinion was united with an equally boundless toleration of all falsehood and deliberate fraud that could favour received opinions. Credulity being taught as a virtue, and all conclusions dictated by authority, a deadly torpor sank upon the human mind, which for many centuries almost suspended its action, and was only effectually broken by the scrutinising, innovating, and freethinking habits that accompanied the rise of the industrial republics in Italy. Few men who are not either priests or monks would not have preferred to live in the best days of the Athenian or of the Roman republics, in the age of Augustus or in the age of the Antonines, rather than in any period that elapsed between the triumph of Christianity and the fourteenth century.

It is, indeed, difficult to conceive any clearer proof than was furnished by the

history of the twelve hundred years after the conversion of Constantine that, while theology has undoubtedly introduced into the world certain elements and principles of good, scarcely, if at all, known to antiquity, while its value as a tincture or modifying influence in society can hardly be overrated, it is by no means for the advantage of mankind that, in the form which the Greek and Catholic Churches present, it should become a controlling arbiter of civilisation. It is often said that the Roman world before Constantine was in a period of rapid decay; that the traditions and vitality of half-suppressed paganism account for many of the aberrations of later times; that the influence of the Church was often rather nominal and superficial than supreme; and that, in judging the ignorance of the Dark Ages, we must make large allowance for the dislocations of society by the barbarians. In all this there is much truth; but when we remember that in the Byzantine Empire the renovating power of theology was tried in a new capital free from pagan traditions, and for more than one thousand years unsubdued by barbarians, and that in the West the Church, for at least seven hundred years after the shocks of the invasions had subsided, exercised a control more absolute than any other moral or intellectual agency has ever attained, it will appear, I think, that the experiment was very sufficiently tried. It is easy to make a catalogue of the glaring vices of antiquity, and to contrast them with the pure morality of Christian writings; but, if we desire to form a just estimate of the realised improvement, we must compare the classical and ecclesiastical civilisations as wholes, and must observe in each case not only the vices that were repressed, but also the degree and variety of positive excellence attained. In the first two centuries of the Christian Church the moral elevation was extremely high, and was continually appealed to as a proof of the divinity of the creed. In the century before the conversion of Constantine a marked depression was already manifest. The two centuries after Constantine are uniformly represented by the Fathers as a period of general and scandalous vice. The ecclesiastical civilisation that followed, though not without its distinctive merits, assuredly supplies no justification of the common boast about the regeneration of society by the Church. That the

civilisation of the last three centuries has risen in most respects to a higher level than any that had preceded it I at least firmly believe; but theological ethics, though very important, form but one of the many and complex elements of its excellence. Mechanical inventions, the habits of industrial life, the discoveries of physical science, the improvements of government, the expansion of literature, the traditions of pagan antiquity, have all a distinguished place, while the more fully its history is investigated, the more clearly two capital truths are disclosed. The first is that, the influence of theology having for centuries numbed and paralysed the whole intellect of Christian Europe, the revival which forms the starting-point of our modern civilisation was mainly due to the fact that two spheres of intellect still remained uncontrolled by the sceptre of Catholicism. The pagan literature of antiquity and the Mahomedan schools of science were the chief agencies in resuscitating the dormant energies of Christendom. The second fact, which I have elsewhere endeavoured to establish in detail, is that during more than three centuries the decadence of theological influence has been one of the most invariable signs and measures of our progress. In medicine, physical science, commercial interests, politics, and even ethics, the reformer has been confronted with theological affirmations which barred his way, which were all defended as of vital importance, and were all in turn compelled to yield before the secularising influence of civilisation.

We have here, then, a problem of deep interest and importance, which I propose to investigate in the present chapter. We have to enquire why it was that a religion which was not more remarkable for the beauty of its moral teaching than for the power with which it acted upon mankind, and which during the last few centuries has been the source of countless blessings to the world, should have proved itself for so long a period, and under such a variety of conditions, altogether unable to regenerate Europe. The question is not one of languid or imperfect action, but of conflicting agencies. In the vast and complex organism of Catholicity there were some parts which acted with admirable force in improving and elevating mankind. There were others which had a directly opposite effect.

The first aspect in which Christianity

presented itself to the world was as a declaration of the fraternity of men in Christ. Considered as immortal beings, destined for the extremes of happiness or of misery, and united to one another by a special community of redemption, the first and most manifest duty of a Christian man was to look upon his fellow-men as sacred beings, and from this notion grew up the eminently Christian idea of the sanctity of all human life. I have already endeavoured to show—and the fact is of such capital importance in meeting the common objections to the reality of natural moral perceptions that I venture, at the risk of tediousness, to recur to it—that nature does not tell man that it is wrong to slay without provocation his fellow-men. Not to dwell upon those early stages of barbarism in which the higher faculties of human nature are still undeveloped, and almost in the condition of embryo, it is an historical fact beyond all dispute that refined, and even moral, societies have existed in which the slaughter of men of some particular class or nation has been regarded with no more compunction than the slaughter of animals in the chase. The early Greeks, in their dealings with the barbarians; the Romans, in their dealings with gladiators, and in some periods of their history with slaves; the Spaniards, in their dealings with Indians; nearly all colonists removed from European supervision, in their dealings with an inferior race; an immense proportion of the nations of antiquity, in their dealings with new-born infants—all have displayed this complete and absolute callousness, and we may discover traces of it even in our own islands and within the last three hundred years.* And difficult as it may be to realise it in our day, when the atrocity of all wanton slaughter of men has become an essential part of our moral feelings, it is, nevertheless, an incontestable fact that this callousness has been continually shown by good men—by men who in all other respects would be regarded in any age as conspicuous for their humanity. In the days of the Tudors the best Englishmen delighted in what we should now deem the most barbarous sports; and it is absolutely certain that in antiquity

* See the masterly description of the relations of the English to the Irish in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, in Froude's *History of England*, ch. xxiv.; and also Lord Macaulay's description of the feelings of the Master of Stair towards the Highlanders. (*History of England*, ch. xviii.)

men of genuine humanity—tender relations, loving friends, charitable neighbours, men in whose eyes the murder of a fellow-citizen would have appeared as atrocious as in our own—attended, instituted, and applauded gladiatorial games, or counselled without a scruple the exposition of infants. But it is, as I conceive, a complete confusion of thought to imagine, as is so commonly done, that any accumulation of facts of this nature throws the smallest doubt upon the reality of innate moral perceptions. All that the intuitive moralist asserts is that we know by nature that there is a distinction between humanity and cruelty; that the first belongs to the higher or better part of our nature, and that it is our duty to cultivate it. The standard of the age, which is itself determined by the general condition of society, constitutes the natural line of duty, for he who falls below it contributes to depress it. Now, there is no fact more absolutely certain than that nations and ages which have differed most widely as to the standard have been perfectly unanimous as to the excellence of humanity. Plato, who recommended infanticide; Cato, who sold his aged slaves; Pliny, who applauded the games of the arena; the old generals, who made their prisoners slaves or gladiators, as well as the modern generals, who refuse to impose upon them any degrading labour; the old legislators, who filled their codes with sentences of torture, mutilation, and hideous forms of death, as well as the modern legislators, who are continually seeking to abridge the punishment of the most guilty; the old disciplinarian, who governed by force, as well as the modern instructor, who governs by sympathy; the Spanish girl, whose dark eye glows with rapture as she watches the frantic bull while the fire streams from the explosive dart that quivers in its neck; as well as the reformers we sometimes meet who are scandalised by all field sports or by the sacrifice of animal life for food; or who will eat only the larger animals, in order to reduce the sacrifice of life to a minimum; or who are continually inventing new methods of quickening animal death—all these persons, widely as they differ in their acts and in their judgments of what things should be called "brutal," and of what things should be called "fantastic," agree in believing humanity to be better than

cruelty, and in attaching a definite condemnation to acts that fall below the standard of their country and their time. Now, it was one of the most important services of Christianity that, besides quickening greatly our benevolent affections, it definitely and dogmatically asserted the sinfulness of all destruction of human life as a matter of amusement or of simple convenience, and thereby formed a new standard, higher than any which then existed in the world.

The influence of Christianity in this respect began with the very earliest stage of human life. The practice of abortion was one to which few persons in antiquity attached any deep feeling of condemnation. I have noticed in a former chapter that the physiological theory that the foetus did not become a living creature till the hour of birth had some influence on the judgments passed upon this practice; and, even where this theory was not generally held, it is easy to account for the prevalence of the act. The death of an unborn child does not appeal very powerfully to the feeling of compassion, and men who had not yet attained any strong sense of the sanctity of human life, who believed that they might regulate their conduct on these matters by utilitarian views, according to the general interest of the community, might very readily conclude that the prevention of birth was in many cases an act of mercy. In Greece, Aristotle not only countenanced the practice, but even desired that it should be enforced by law when population had exceeded certain assigned limits.¹ No law in Greece, or in the Roman Republic, or during the greater part of the Empire, condemned it;² and if, as has been thought, some measure was adopted condemnatory of it before the close of the pagan Empire, that measure was altogether inoperative. A long chain of writers, both pagan and Christian, represent the practice as avowed and almost universal. They describe it as resulting, not simply from licentiousness or from poverty, but even from so slight a motive as vanity, which made mothers shrink from the disfigurement of childbirth. They speak of a mother who had never destroyed her unborn offspring as deserving of signal praise, and they assure us

¹ See, on the views of Aristotle, Labourt, *Recherches historiques sur les Enfants trouvés* (Paris, 1848), p. 9.

² See Gravina, *De Ortu et Progressu Juris Civis*, lib. i. 44.

that the frequency of the crime was such that it gave rise to a regular profession. At the same time, while Ovid, Seneca, Favorinus the Stoic of Arles, Plutarch, and Juvenal all speak of abortion as general and notorious, they all speak of it as unquestionably criminal.¹ It was probably regarded by the average Romans of the later days of paganism much as Englishmen in the last century [the eighteenth] regarded convivial excesses—as certainly wrong, but so venial as scarcely to deserve censure.

The language of the Christians from the very beginning was widely different. With unwavering consistency and with the strongest emphasis they denounced the practice, not simply as inhuman, but as definitely murder. In the penitential discipline of the Church abortion was placed in the same category as infanticide, and the stern sentence to which the guilty person was subject imprinted on the minds of Christians more deeply than any mere exhortations a sense of the enormity of the crime. By the Council of Ancyra the guilty mother was excluded from the sacrament to the very hour of death; and though this penalty was soon reduced, first to ten and afterwards to seven years' penitence,² the offence still ranked among the gravest in the legislation of the Church. In one very remarkable way the reforms of Christianity in this sphere were powerfully sustained by

a doctrine which is, perhaps, the most revolting in the whole theology of the Fathers. To the pagans, even when condemning abortion and infanticide, these crimes appeared comparatively trivial, because the victims seemed very insignificant and their sufferings very slight. The death of an adult man who is struck down in the midst of his enterprise and his hopes, who is united by ties of love or friendship to multitudes around him, and whose departure causes a perturbation and a pang to the society in which he has moved, excites feelings very different from any produced by the painless extinction of a new-born infant, which, having scarcely touched the earth, has known none of its cares and very little of its love. But to the theologian this infant life possessed a fearful significance. The moment, they taught, the foetus in the womb acquired animation it became an immortal being, destined, even if it died unborn, to be raised again on the last day, responsible for the sin of Adam, and doomed, if it perished without baptism, to be excluded for ever from heaven, and to be cast, as the Greeks taught, into a painless and joyless limbo, or, as the Latins taught, into the abyss of hell. It is probably, in a considerable degree, to this doctrine that we owe in the first instance the healthy sense of the value and sanctity of infant life which so broadly distinguishes Christian from pagan societies, and which is now so thoroughly incorporated with our moral feelings as to be independent of all doctrinal changes. That which appealed so powerfully to the compassion of the early and mediæval Christians in the fate of the murdered infants was not that they died, but that they commonly died unbaptised; and the criminality of abortion was immeasurably aggravated when it was believed to involve, not only the extinction of a transient life, but also the damnation of an immortal soul.³ In the *Lives of the Saints*

¹ "Nunc uterum vitiat quæ vult formosa videri,
Raraque in hoc ævo est, quæ velit esse parens."

—Ovid, *De Nuce*, 22-23

The same writer has devoted one of his elegies (ii. 14) to reproaching his mistress Corinna with having been guilty of this act. It was not without danger, and Ovid says:—

"Sæpe suos utero quæ necat ipsa perit"

A niece of Domitian is said to have died in consequence of having, at the command of the emperor, practised it (Sueton. *Domit* xxii.). Plutarch notices the custom (*De Sanitate tuenda*), and Seneca eulogises Helvia (*Ad. Helv.* xvi.) for being exempt from vanity and having never destroyed her unborn offspring. Favorinus, in a remarkable passage (Aulus Gellius, *Noct. Att.* xii. 1), speaks of the act as "publica detestatione communique odio dignum," and proceeds to argue that it is only a degree less criminal for mothers to put out their children to nurse. Juvenal has some well-known and emphatic lines on the subject:—

"Sed jacet aurato vix ulla puerpera lecto;

Tantum artes hujus, tantum medicamina possunt,
Quæ steriles facit, atque homines in ventre necandos
Conducit."

—*Sat.* vi. 592-595.

There are also many allusions to it in the Christian writers. Thus Minucius Felix (*Octavius*, xxx.): "Vos enim video procreatos filios nuncferis et a vibus exponere, nunc adstrangulatos misero mortis genere elidere. Sunt quæ in ipsis visceribus, medicaminibus epotis, originem futuri hominis extinguant, et parricidium faciant antequam pariant."

² See Laocourt, *Recherches sur les Enfants trouvés*, p. 25.

³ Among the barbarian laws there is a very curious one about a daily compensation for children who had been killed in the womb on account of the daily suffering of those children in hell. "Propterea diuturnam judicaverunt antecessores nostri compositionem et iudices postquam religio Christianitatis inolevit in mundo. Quia diuturnam postquam incarnationem suscepit anima, quamvis ad nativitatis lucem minime pervenisset, patitur poenam, quia sine sacramento regenerationis abortivo modo tradita est ad inferos." (*Leges Bajuvariorum*, tit. vii. cap. xx. in Canciani, *Leges Barbar.* vol. ii. p. 374.) The first foundling hospital of which we have undoubted record is that founded at Milan, by a man named Datheus, in A.D. 789. Muratori has preserved (*Antich. Ital.* Diss.

there is a curious legend of a man who, being desirous of ascertaining the condition of a child before birth, slew a pregnant woman, committing thereby a double murder—that of the mother and of the child in her womb. Stung by remorse, the murderer fled to the desert, and passed the remainder of his life in constant penance and prayer. At last, after many years, the voice of God told him that he had been forgiven the murder of the woman. But yet his end was a clouded one. He never could obtain an assurance that he had been forgiven the death of the child.¹

If we pass to the next stage of human life, that of the new-born infant, we find ourselves in presence of that practice of infanticide which was one of the deepest stains of the ancient civilisation. The natural history of this crime is somewhat peculiar.² Among savages, whose feelings of compassion are very faint, and whose warlike and nomadic habits are eminently unfavourable to infant life, it is, as might be expected, the usual custom for the parent to decide whether he desires to preserve the child he has called into existence, and, if he does not, to expose or

slay it. In nations that have passed out of the stage of barbarism, but are still rude and simple in their habits, the practice of infanticide is usually rare; but, unlike other crimes of violence, it is not naturally diminished by the progress of civilisation, for, after the period of savage life is passed, its prevalence is influenced much more by the sensuality than by the barbarity of a people.³ We may trace, too, in many countries and ages, the notion that children, as the fruit, representatives, and dearest possessions of their parents, are acceptable sacrifices to the gods.⁴ Infanticide, as is well known, was almost universally admitted among the Greeks, being sanctioned, and in some cases enjoined, upon what we should now call "the greatest happiness principle," by the ideal legislations of Plato and Aristotle, and by the actual legislations of Lycurgus and Solon. Regarding the community as a whole, they clearly saw that it is in the highest degree for the interest of society that the increase of population should be very jealously restricted, and that the State should be as far as possible free from helpless and unproductive members; and they therefore concluded that the painless destruction of infant life, and especially of those infants who were so deformed or diseased that their lives, if prolonged, would probably have been a burden to themselves, was on the whole a benefit. The very sensual tone of Greek life rendered the modern notion of prolonged continence wholly alien to their thoughts; and the

xxxvii.) the charter embodying the motives of the founder, in which the following sentences occur: "Quia frequenter per luxuriam hominum genus decipitur, et exinde malum homicidii generatur, dum concipientes ex adulterio, ne prodantur in publico, fetos teneros necant, et absque baptismatis lavacro parvulos ad Tartara mittunt, quia nullum reperiunt locum, quo servare vivos valeant," &c. Henry II. of France, 1556, made a long law against women who, "advenant le temps de leur part et délivrance de leur enfant, occultement s'en délivrent, puis le suffoquent et autrement suppriment sans leur avoir fait empartir le Saint Sacrement du Baptême" (Labourt, *Recherches sur les Enfants trouvés*, p. 47.) There is a story told of a Queen of Portugal (sister to Henry V. of England, and mother of St. Ferdinand) that, being in childbirth, her life was despaired of unless she took a medicine which would accelerate the birth, but probably sacrifice the life of the child. She answered that "she would not purchase her temporal life by sacrificing the eternal salvation of her son." (Bollandists, *Act. Sanctor.*, June 5th.)

¹ Tillemont, *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire ecclésiastique* (Paris, 1701), tome x. p. 41. St. Clem. Alexand. says that infants in the womb and exposed infants have guardian angels to watch over them. (*Strom.* v.)

² There is an extremely large literature devoted to the subject of infanticide, exposition, foundlings, &c. The books I have chiefly followed are Terme et Monfalcon, *Histoire des Enfants trouvés* (Paris, 1840); Remacle, *Des Hospices d'Enfants trouvés* (1838); Labourt, *Recherches historiques sur les Enfants trouvés* (Paris, 1848); Königswarter, *Essays sur la Législation des Peuples anciens et modernes relative aux Enfants nés hors Mariage* (Paris, 1842). There are also many details on the subject in Godefroy's Commentary to the laws about children in the Theodosian Code, in Malthus, *On Population*, in Edward's tract *On the State of Slavery in the Early and Middle Ages of Christianity*, and in most ecclesiastical histories.

PART. II.

³ It must not, however, be inferred from this that infanticide increases in direct proportion to the unchastity of a nation. Probably the condition of civilised society in which it is most common is where a large amount of actual unchastity co-exists with very strong social condemnation of the sinner, and where, in consequence, there is an intense anxiety to conceal the fall. A recent writer on Spain has noticed the almost complete absence of infanticide in that country, and has ascribed it to the great leniency of public opinion towards female frailty. Foundling hospitals, also, greatly influence the history of infanticide; but the mortality in them was long so great that it may be questioned whether they have diminished the number of the deaths, though they have, as I believe, greatly diminished the number of the murders of children. Lord Kames, writing in the last half of the eighteenth century, says: "In Wales, even at present, and in the Highlands of Scotland, it is scarce a disgrace for a young woman to have a bastard. In the country last mentioned, the first instance known of a bastard child being destroyed by its mother through shame is a late one. The virtue of chastity appears to be thus gaining ground, as the only temptation a woman can have to destroy her child is to conceal her frailty." (*Sketches of the History of Man—On the Progress of the Female Sex.*) The last clause is clearly inaccurate, but there seems reason for believing that maternal affection is generally stronger than want, but weaker than shame.

⁴ See Warburton's *Divine Legation*, vii. a.

extremely low social and intellectual condition of Greek mothers, who exercised no appreciable influence over the habits of thought of the nation, should also I think, be taken into account, for it has always been observed that mothers are much more distinguished than fathers for their affection for infants that have not yet manifested the first dawning of reason. Even in Greece, however, infanticide and exposition were not universally permitted. In Thebes these offences are said to have been punished by death.¹

The power of life and death, which in Rome was originally conceded to the father over his children, would appear to involve an unlimited permission of infanticide; but a very old law, popularly ascribed to Romulus, in this respect restricted the parental rights, enjoining the father to bring up all his male children, and at least his eldest female child, forbidding him to destroy any well-formed child till it had completed its third year, when the affections of the parent might be supposed to be developed, but permitting the exposition of deformed or maimed children with the consent of their five nearest relations.² The Roman policy was always to encourage, while the Greek policy was rather to restrain, population, and infanticide never appears to have been common in Rome till the corrupt and sensual days of the Empire. The legislators then absolutely condemned it, and it was indirectly discouraged by laws which accorded special privileges to the fathers of many children, exempted poor parents from most of the burden of taxation, and in some degree provided for the security of exposed infants. Public opinion probably differed little from that of our own day as to the fact, though it differed from it much as to the degree, of its criminality. It was, as will be remembered, one of the charges most frequently brought against the Christians, and it was one that never failed to arouse popular indignation. Pagan and Christian authorities are, however, united in speaking of infanticide as a crying vice of the

Empire, and Tertullian observed that no laws were more easily or more constantly evaded than those which condemned it.³ A broad distinction was popularly drawn between infanticide and exposition. The latter, though probably condemned, was certainly not punished by law;⁴ it was practised on a gigantic scale and with absolute impunity, noticed by writers with the most frigid indifference, and, at least in the case of destitute parents, considered a very venial offence.⁵ Often, no doubt, the exposed children perished, but more frequently the very extent of the practice saved the lives of the victims. They were brought systematically to a

¹ *Ad Nat.* i. 15.

² The well-known juriconsult Paulus had laid down the proposition: "Necare videtur non tantum is qui partum perfoecat sed et is qui abijcit et qui alimonia denegat et qui publicis locis misericordie causa exponit quam ipse non habet." (*Dig. lib. xxv. tit. iii. l. 4.*) These words have given rise to a famous controversy between two Dutch professors, named Noodt and Bynkershoek, conducted on both sides with great learning, and on the side of Noodt with great passion. Noodt maintained that these words are simply the expression of a moral truth, not a judicial decision, and that exposition was never illegal in Rome till some time after the establishment of Christianity. His opponent argued that exposition was legally identical with infanticide, and became, therefore, illegal when the power of life and death was withdrawn from the father. See the works of Noodt (Cologne, 1763) and of Bynkershoek (Cologne, 1761). It was at least certain that exposition was notorious and avowed, and the law against it, if it existed, inoperative. Gibbon (*Decline and Fall*, ch. xiv) thinks the law censured but did not punish exposition. See, too, Troplong, *Influence du Christianisme sur le Droit*, p. 271.

³ Quintilian speaks in a tone of apology, if not justification, of the exposition of the children of destitute parents (*Decl. cccvi.*), and even Plutarch speaks of it without censure (*De Amor. Prois.*). There are several curious illustrations in Latin literature of the different feelings of fathers and mothers on this matter. Terence (*Heauton* Act. iii. Scene 5) represents Chremes as having, as a matter of course, charged his pregnant wife to have her child killed provided it was a girl. The mother, overcome by pity, shrank from doing so, and secretly gave it to an old woman to expose it, in hopes that it might be preserved. Chremes, on hearing what had been done, reproached his wife for her womanly pity, and told her she had been not only disobedient but irrational, for she was only consigning her daughter to the life of a prostitute. In Apuleius (*Metam.* lib. x.) we have a similar picture of a father starting for a journey, leaving his wife in childbirth, and giving her his parting command to kill her child if it should be a girl, which she could not bring herself to do. The girl was brought up secretly. In the case of weak or deformed infants infanticide seems to have been habitual. "Fortentosos fœtus extingimus, liberos quoque, si debiles monstrosque editi sunt, mergimus. Non ira, sed ratio est, a sanis inutilia secernere" (Seneca, *De Ira*, i. 15). Terence has introduced a picture of the exposition of an infant into his *Andria*, Act. iv. Scene 5. See, too, Suet. *August.* lxx. According to Suetonius (*Calig.* v.), on the death of Germanicus, women exposed their newborn children in sign of grief. Ovid had dwelt with much feeling on the barbarity of these practices. It is a very curious fact, which has been noticed by Warburton, that Chremes, whose sentiments about infants we have just seen, is the very personage into whose mouth Terence has put the famous sentiment, "Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto."

⁴ Ælian, *Varia Hist.* ii. 7. Passages from the Greek imaginative writers, representing exposition as the avowed and habitual practice of poor parents, are collected by Terme et Monfalcon, *Hist. des Enfants trouvés*, pp. 39-45. Tacitus notices with praise (*Germania*, xix.) that the Germans did not allow infanticide. He also notices (*Hist.* v. 5) the prohibition of infanticide among the Jews, and ascribes it to their desire to increase the population.

⁵ Dion. Halic. ii.

column near the Velabrum, and there taken by speculators, who educated them as slaves, or very frequently as prostitutes.¹

On the whole, what was demanded on this subject was not any clearer moral teaching, but rather a stronger enforcement of the condemnation long since passed upon infanticide, and an increased protection for exposed infants. By the penitential sentences, by the dogmatic considerations I have enumerated, and by the earnest exhortations both of her preachers and writers, the Church laboured to deepen the sense of the enormity of the act, and especially to convince men that the guilt of abandoning their children to the precarious and doubtful mercy of the stranger was scarcely less than that of simple infanticide.² In the civil law her influence was also displayed, though not, I think, very advantageously. By the counsel, it is said, of Lactantius, Constantine, in the very year of his conversion, in order to diminish infanticide by destitute parents, issued a decree, applicable in the first instance to Italy, but extended in A.D. 322 to Africa, in which he commanded that those children whom their parents were unable to support should be clothed and fed at the expense of the State,³ a policy which had already been pursued on a large scale under the Antonines. In A.D. 331 a law, intended to multiply the chances of the exposed child being taken charge of by some charitable or interested person, provided that the foundling should remain the absolute property of its saviour, whether he adopted it as a son or employed it as a slave, and that the parent should not have power at any future time to reclaim it.⁴ By another law, which had been issued in A.D. 329, it had been provided that children who had been not exposed, but

sold, might be reclaimed upon payment by the father.⁵

The last two laws cannot be regarded with unmingled satisfaction. The law regulating the condition of exposed children, though undoubtedly enacted with the most benevolent intentions, was in some degree a retrograde step, the pagan laws having provided that the father might always withdraw the child he had exposed, from servitude, by payment of the expenses incurred in supporting it,² while Trajan had even decided that the exposed child could not become under any circumstances a slave.³ The law of Constantine, on the other hand, doomed it to an irrevocable servitude; and this law continued in force till A.D. 529, when Justinian, reverting to the principle of Trajan, decreed that not only the father lost all legitimate authority over his child by exposing it, but also that the person who had saved it could not by that act deprive it of its natural liberty. But this law applied only to the Eastern Empire; and in part at least of the West⁴ the servitude of exposed infants continued for centuries, and appears only to have terminated with the general extinction of slavery in Europe. The law of Constantine concerning the sale of children was also a step, though perhaps a necessary step, of retrogression. A series of emperors, among whom Caracalla was conspicuous, had denounced and endeavoured to abolish, as "shameful," the traffic in free children, and Diocletian had expressly and absolutely condemned it.⁵ The extreme misery, however, resulting from the civil wars under Constantine had rendered it necessary to authorise the old practice of selling children in the case of absolute destitution, which, though it had been condemned, had probably never altogether ceased. Theodosius the Great attempted to take a step in advance by decreeing that the children thus sold might regain their freedom without the repayment of the purchase money, a temporary service being a sufficient compensation for the purchase;⁶ but this measure was repealed by Valentinian III.

¹ That these were the usual fates of exposed infants is noticed by several writers. Some, too, both pagan and Christian (Quintilian, *Decl.* cccvi., Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* vi. 20, etc.), speak of the liability to incestuous marriages resulting from frequent exposition. In the Greek poets there are several allusions to rich childless men adopting foundlings, and Juvenal says it was common for Roman wives to palm off foundlings on their husbands for their sons. (*Sat.* vi. 603.) There is an extremely horrible declamation in Seneca the Rhetorician (*Controvers.* lib. v. 33) about exposed children who were said to have been maimed and mutilated, either to prevent their recognition by their parents, or that they might gain money as beggars for their masters.

² See passages on this point cited by Godefroy in his *Commentary to the Law "De Expositis," Codex Theod.* lib. v. tit. 7.

³ *Codex Theod.* lib. xi. tit. 27.

⁴ *Ibid.* lib. v. tit. 7, lex 1.

¹ *Codex Theod.* lib. v. tit. 8, lex 1.

² See Godefroy's *Commentary to the Law*

³ In a letter to the younger Pliny, (*Ep.* x. 72.)

⁴ See on this point Muratori, *Antich. Ital. Diss.* xxxvii.

⁵ See, on these laws, Wallon, *Hist. de l'Esclavage*, tome i. pp. 52, 53.

⁶ See *Cod. Theod.* lib. ii. tit. 3, lex 1, and the *Commentary*.

The sale of children in case of great necessity, though denounced by the Fathers,¹ continued long after the time of Theodosius, nor does any Christian emperor appear to have enforced the humane enactment of Diocletian.

Together with these measures for the protection of exposed children, there were laws directly condemnatory of infanticide. This branch of the subject is obscured by much ambiguity and controversy; but it appears most probable that the pagan legislation reckoned infanticide as a form of homicide, though, being deemed less atrocious than other forms of homicide, it was punished, not by death, but by banishment.² A law of Constantine, intended principally, and perhaps exclusively, for Africa, where the sacrifices of children to Saturn were very common, assimilated to parricide the murder of a child by its father;³ and finally Valentinian, in A.D. 374, made all infanticide a capital offence,⁴ and especially enjoined the punishment of exposition.⁵ A law of the Spanish Visigoths, in the seventh century, punished infanticide and abortion with death or blindness.⁶ In the Capitularies of Charlemagne the former crime was punished as homicide.⁷

It is not possible to ascertain, with any degree of accuracy, what diminution of infanticide resulted from these measures. It may, however, be safely asserted that the publicity of the trade in exposed children became impossible under the influence of Christianity, and that the sense of the serious nature of the crime was very considerably increased. The extreme destitution, which was one of its most fertile causes, was met by Christian charity. Many exposed children appear to have been educated by individual Christians.⁸ Brephotrophia and Orphano-

trophia are among the earliest recorded charitable institutions of the Church; but it is not certain that exposed children were admitted into them, and we find no trace for several centuries of Christian foundling hospitals. This form of charity grew up gradually in the early part of the Middle Ages. It is said that one existed at Trèves in the sixth, and at Angers in the seventh century, and it is certain that one existed at Milan in the eighth century.⁹ The Council of Rouen, in the ninth century, invited women who had secretly borne children to place them at the door of the church, and undertook to provide for them if they were not reclaimed. It is probable that they were brought up among the numerous slaves or serfs attached to the ecclesiastical properties; for a decree of the Council of Arles, in the fifth century, and afterwards a law of Charlemagne, had echoed the enactment of Constantine, declaring that exposed children should be the slaves of their protectors. As slavery declined, the memorials of many sins, like many other of the discordant elements of mediæval society, were doubtless absorbed and consecrated in the monastic societies. The strong sense always evinced in the Church of the enormity of unchastity probably rendered the ecclesiastics more cautious in this than in other forms of charity, for institutions especially intended for deserted children advanced but slowly. Even Rome, the mother of many charities, could boast of none till the beginning of the thirteenth century.¹⁰ About the middle of the twelfth century we find societies at Milan charged, among other functions, with seeking for exposed children. Towards the close of the same century a monk of Montpellier, whose very name is doubtful, but who is commonly spoken of as Brother Guy, founded a confraternity called by the name of the

¹ On the very persistent denunciation of this practice by the Fathers, see many examples in *Terme et Montalcon*.

² This is a mere question of definition, upon which lawyers have expended much learning and discussion. Cujas thought the Romans considered infanticide a crime, but a crime generically different from homicide. Godefroy maintains that it was classified as homicide, but that, being esteemed less heinous than the other forms of homicide, it was only punished by exile. See the Commentary to *Cod. Theod.* lib. ix. tit. 14, l. 1.

³ *Cod. Theod.* lib. ix. tit. 15.

⁴ *Ibid.* lib. ix. tit. 14, lex 1.

⁵ *Corp. Juris*, lib. viii. tit. 52, lex 2.

⁶ *Leges Visigothorum* (lib. vi. tit. 3, lex 7) and other laws (lib. iv. tit. 4) condemned exposition.

⁷ "Si quis infanitem necaverit ut homicida teneatur," (*Capit.* vii. 168.)

⁸ It appears, from a passage of St. Augustine, that Christian virgins were accustomed to collect exposed children and to have them brought into the Church.

See *Terme et Montalcon, Hist. des Enfants trouvés*, p. 74.

⁹ Compare Labourt, *Rech. sur les Enfants trouvés*, pp. 32, 33; Muratori, *Antichità Italiane*, Dissert. xxxvii. Muratori has also briefly noticed the history of these charities in his *Carità Christiana*, cap. xxvii.

¹⁰ The first seems to have been the hospital of Sta. Maria in Sassia, which had existed with various changes from the eighth century, but was made a foundling hospital and confided to the care of Guy of Montpellier in A.D. 1204. According to one tradition, Pope Innocent III. had been shocked at hearing of infants drawn in the nets of fishermen from the Tiber. According to another, he was inspired by an angel. Compare Remacle, *Hospices d'Enfants trouvés*, pp. 36-37, and Amydemus, *Pietas Romana* (a book written A.D. 1624, and translated in part into English in A.D. 1697), Eng. trans. pp. 2, 3.

Holy Ghost, and devoted to the protection and education of children; and this society in the two following centuries ramified over a great part of Europe.¹ Though principally and at first, perhaps, exclusively intended for the care of the orphans of legitimate marriages—though in the fifteenth century the Hospital of the Holy Ghost at Paris even refused to admit deserted children—yet the care of foundlings soon passed in a great measure into its hands. At last, after many complaints of the frequency of infanticide, St. Vincent de Paul arose, and gave so great an impulse to that branch of charity that he may be regarded as its second author, and his influence was felt, not only in private charities, but in legislative enactments. Into the effects of these measures—the encouragement of the vice of incontinence by institutions that were designed to suppress the crime of infanticide, and the serious moral controversies suggested by this apparent conflict between the interests of humanity and of chastity—it is not necessary for me to enter. We are at present concerned with the principles that actuated Christian charity, not with the wisdom of its organisations. Whatever mistakes may have been made, the entire movement I have traced displays an anxiety not only for the life, but also for the moral well-being, of the castaways of society, such as the most humane nations of antiquity had never reached. This minute and scrupulous care for human life and human virtue in the humblest forms, in the slave, the gladiator, the savage, or the infant, was indeed wholly foreign to the genius of paganism. It was produced by the Christian doctrine of the inestimable value of each immortal soul. It is the distinguishing and transcendent characteristic of every society into which the spirit of Christianity has passed.

The influence of Christianity in the protection of infant life, though very real, may be, and I think often has been, exaggerated. It would be difficult to overrate its influence in the sphere we have next to examine. There is scarcely any other single reform so important in the moral history of mankind as the suppression of the gladiatorial shows, and this feat must be almost exclusively ascribed to the

Christian Church. When we remember how extremely few of the best and greatest men of the Roman world had absolutely condemned the games of the amphitheatre, it is impossible to regard without the deepest admiration the unwavering and uncompromising consistency of the patristic denunciations. And even comparing the Fathers with the most enlightened pagan moralists in their treatment of this matter, we shall usually find one most significant difference. The pagan, in the spirit of philosophy, denounced these games as inhuman, or demoralising, or degrading, or brutal. The Christian, in the spirit of the Church, represented them as a definite sin, the sin of murder, for which the spectators as well as the actors were directly responsible before Heaven. In the very latest days of the pagan Empire magnificent amphitheatres were still arising,² and Constantine himself had condemned numerous barbarian captives to combat with wild beasts.³ It was in A.D. 325, immediately after the convocation of the Council of Nice, that the first Christian emperor issued the first edict in the Roman Empire condemnatory of the gladiatorial games.⁴ It was issued in Berytus, in Syria, and is believed by some to have been only applicable to the province of Phœnicia;⁵ but even in this province it was suffered to be inoperative, for, only four years later, Libanius speaks of the shows as habitually celebrated at Antioch.⁶ In the Western Empire their continuance was fully recognised, though a few infinitesimal restrictions were imposed upon them. Constantine, in A.D. 357, prohibited the lanistæ, or purveyors of gladiators, from bribing servants of the palace to enrol themselves as combatants.⁷ Valentinian, in A.D. 365, forbade any Christian criminal,⁸ and in A.D. 367 anyone connected with the Palatine,⁹

¹ E.g., the amphitheatre of Verona was only built under Diocletian.

² "Quid hoc triumpho pulchrius?.. Tantam captivorum multitudinem bestias obicit ut ingrati et perdiffidi non minus doloris ex ludibrio sui quam ex ipsa morte patiantur" (Incerti, *Panegyricus Constant.*) "Puberes qui in manus venerunt, quorum nec perfidia erat apta militiæ nec ferocia servituti, ad penas spectaculo dati sævientes bestias multitudine sua fatigarunt." (Eumenius, *Paneg. Constant.* xi.)

³ *Cod. Theod.* lib. xv. tit. 12, lex 1. Sozomen, i. 8

⁴ This, at least, is the opinion of Godefroy, who has discussed the subject very fully. (*Cod. Theod.* lib. xv. tit. 12.)

⁵ Libanius, *De Vita Sua*, 3.

⁶ *Cod. Theod.* lib. xv. tit. 12, l. 2.

⁷ *Ibid.* lib. ix. tit. 40, l. 8

⁸ *Ibid.* lib. ix. tit. 40, l. 11.

¹ For the little that is known about this missionary of charity, compare Remacle, *Hospices d'Enfants trouvés*, pp. 34-44, and Labourt, *Recherches historiques sur les Enfants trouvés*, pp. 38-41.

being condemned to fight. Honorius prohibited any slave who had been a gladiator passing into the service of a senator: but the real object of this last measure was, I imagine, not so much to stigmatise the gladiator as to guard against the danger of an armed nobility.¹ A much more important fact is that the spectacles were never introduced into the new capital of Constantine. At Rome, though they became less numerous, they do not appear to have been suspended until their final suppression. The passion for gladiators was the worst, while religious liberty was probably the best, feature of the old pagan society; and it is a melancholy fact that of these two it was the nobler part that in the Christian Empire was first destroyed. Theodosius the Great, who suppressed all diversity of worship throughout the Empire, and who showed himself on many occasions the docile slave of the clergy, won the applause of the pagan Symmachus by compelling his barbarian prisoners to fight as gladiators.² Besides this occasion, we have special knowledge of gladiatorial games that were celebrated in A.D. 385, in A.D. 391, and afterwards in the reign of Honorius; and the practice of condemning criminals to the arena still continued.³

But although the suppression of the gladiatorial shows was not effected in the metropolis of the Empire till nearly ninety years after Christianity had been the State religion, the distinction between the teaching of the Christians and pagans on the subject remained unimpaired. To the last, the most estimable of the pagans appear to have regarded them with favour or indifference. Julian, it is true, with a rare magnanimity, refused persistently, in his conflict with Christianity, to avail himself, as he might most easily have done, of the popular passion for games which the Church condemned; but Libanius has noticed them with some approbation,⁴ and Symmachus, as we have already seen, both instituted and applauded them. But the Christians steadily refused to admit any professional gladiator to baptism till he had pledged himself to abandon his calling, and every

Christian who attended the games was excluded from communion. The preachers and writers of the Church denounced them with the most unqualified vehemence, and the poet Prudentius made a direct and earnest appeal to the emperor to suppress them. In the East, where they had never taken very firm root, they appear to have ceased about the time of Theodosius, and a passion for chariot races, which rose to the most extravagant height at Constantinople and in many other cities, took their place. In the West, the last gladiatorial show was celebrated at Rome, under Honorius, in A.D. 404, in honour of the triumph of Stilicho, when an Asiatic monk, named Telemachus, animated by the noblest heroism of philanthropy, rushed into the amphitheatre and attempted to part the combatants. He perished beneath a shower of stones flung by the angry spectators; but his death led to the final abolition of the games.⁵ Combats of men with wild beasts continued, however, much later, and were especially popular in the East. The difficulty of procuring wild animals, amid the general poverty, contributed, with other causes, to their decline. They sank at last into games of cruelty to animals, but of little danger to men, and were finally condemned, at the end of the seventh century, by the Council of Trullo.⁶ In Italy the custom of sham fights, which continued through the whole of the Middle Ages, and which Petrarch declared were in his days sometimes attended with considerable bloodshed, may perhaps be traced in some degree to the traditions of the amphitheatre.⁷

The extinction of the gladiatorial spectacles is, of all the results of early Christian influence, that upon which the historian can look with the deepest and most unmingled satisfaction. Horrible as was the bloodshed they directly caused, these games were perhaps still more pernicious on account of the callousness of feeling they diffused through all classes, the fatal obstacle they presented to any general elevation of the standard of humanity. Yet the attitude of the pagans decisively proves that no progress

¹ *Codex Theod.* lib. xv. tit. 12, 1 3.

² Symmach. *Ex.* x. 61.

³ M. Wallon has traced these last shows with much learning. (*Hist. de l'Esclavage*, tome iii. pp. 421-429.)

⁴ He wavered, however, on the subject, and on one occasion condemned them. See Wallon, tome iii. p. 423.

⁵ Theodoret, v. 26.

⁶ Muller, *De Genio Aevi Theodosiani* (1797), vol. ii. p. 88; Milman, *Hist. of Early Christianity*, vol. iii. pp. 343-347.

⁷ See on these fights Ozanam's *Civilisation in the Fifth Century* (Eng. trans.), vol. i. p. 130.

of philosophy or social civilisation was likely, for a very long period, to have extirpated them; and it can hardly be doubted that, had they been flourishing unchallenged as in the days of Trajan, when the rude warriors of the North obtained the empire of Italy, they would have been eagerly adopted by the conquerors, would have taken deep root in mediæval life, and have indefinitely retarded the progress of humanity. Christianity alone was powerful enough to tear this evil plant from the Roman soil. The Christian custom of legacies for the relief of the indigent and suffering replaced the pagan custom of bequeathing sums of money for games in honour of the dead; and the month of December, which was looked forward to with eagerness through all the Roman world as the special season of the gladiatorial spectacles, was consecrated in the Church by another festival commemorative of the advent of Christ.

The notion of the sanctity of human life, which led the early Christians to combat, and at last to overthrow, the gladiatorial games, was carried by some of them to an extent altogether irreconcilable with national independence and with the prevailing penal system. Many of them taught that no Christian might lawfully take away life, either as a soldier, or by bringing a capital charge, or by acting as an executioner. The first of these questions it will be convenient to reserve for a later period of this chapter, when I propose to examine the relations of Christianity to the military spirit, and a very few words will be sufficient to dispose of the others. The notion that there is something impure and defiling even in a just execution is one which may be traced through many ages; and executioners, as the ministers of the law, have been from very ancient times regarded as unholy. In both Greece and Rome the law compelled them to live outside the walls, and at Rhodes they were never permitted even to enter the city.¹ Notions of this kind were very strongly held in the early Church; and a decree of the penitential discipline, which was enforced even against emperors and generals, forbade anyone whose hands had been imbrued in blood, even when that blood was shed in a righteous war, approaching the altar without a preparatory period of

penance. The opinions of the Christians of the first three centuries were usually formed without any regard to the necessities of civil or political life; but when the Church obtained an ascendancy it was found necessary speedily to modify them; and although Lactantius, in the fourth century, maintained the unlawfulness of all bloodshed² as strongly as Origen in the third and Tertullian in the second, the common doctrine was simply that no priest or bishop must take any part in a capital charge. From this exceptional position of the clergy they speedily acquired the position of official intercessors for criminals, ambassadors of mercy, when, from some act of sedition or other cause, their city or neighbourhood was menaced with a bloody invasion. The right of sanctuary, which was before possessed by the Imperial statues and by the pagan temples, was accorded to the churches. During the holy seasons of Lent and Easter no criminal trials could be held, and no criminal could be tortured or executed.³ Miracles, it was said, were sometimes wrought to attest the innocence of accused or condemned men, but were never wrought to consign criminals to execution by the civil power.³

All this had an importance much beyond its immediate effect in tempering the administration of the law. It contributed largely to associate in the popular imagination the ideas of sanctity and of mercy, and to increase the reverence for human life. It also had another remarkable effect, to which I have adverted in another work. The belief that it was wrong for a priest to bring any charge that could give rise to a capital sentence caused the leading clergy to shrink from persecuting heresy to death, at a time when in all other respects the theory of

¹ See a very unequivocal passage, *Inst. Div.* vi. 20. Several earlier testimonies on the subject are given by Barbeyrac, *Morale des Pères*, and in many other books.

² See two laws enacted in A.D. 380 (*Cod. Theod.* ix. tit. 35, l. 4) and A.D. 389 (*Cod. Theod.* ix. tit. 35, l. 5). Theodosius the Younger made a law (ix. tit. 35, l. 7) excepting the Isaurian robbers from the privileges of these laws.

³ There are, of course, innumerable miracles punishing guilty men, but I know none assisting the civil power in doing so. As an example of the miracles in defence of the innocent, I may cite one by St. Macarius. An innocent man, accused of a murder, fled to him. He brought both the accused and accusers to the tomb of the murdered man, and asked him whether the prisoner was the murderer. The corpse answered in the negative; the bystanders implored St. Macarius to ask it to reveal the real culprit; but St. Macarius refused to do so. (*Vita Patrum*, lib. ii. cap. xxviii.)

¹ Nieupoort, *De Ritibus Romanorum*, p. 169

persecution had been fully matured. When it was readily admitted that heresy was in the highest degree criminal and ought to be made penal; when laws banishing, fining, or imprisoning heretics filled the statute-book, and when every vestige of religious liberty was suppressed at the instigation of the clergy, these still shrank from the last and inevitable step, not because it was an atrocious violation of the rights of conscience, but because it was contrary to the ecclesiastical discipline for a bishop, under any circumstances, to countenance bloodshed. It was on this ground that St. Augustine, while eagerly advocating the persecution of the Donatists, more than once expressed a wish that they should not be punished with death, and that St. Ambrose and St. Martin of Tours, who were both energetic persecutors, expressed their abhorrence of the Spanish bishops, who had caused some Priscillianists to be executed. I have elsewhere noticed the odious hypocrisy of the later inquisitors, who relegated the execution of the sentence to the civil power, with a prayer that the heretics should be punished "as mildly as possible, and without the effusion of blood,"¹ which came at last to be interpreted, by the death of fire; but I may here add that this hideous mockery is not unique in the history of religion. Plutarch suggests that one of the reasons for burying unchaste vestals alive was that they were so sacred that it was unlawful to lay violent hands upon them;² and among the Donatists the Circumcelliones were for a time accustomed to abstain, in obedience to the evangelical command, from the use of the sword, while they beat to death those who differed from their theological opinions with massive clubs, to which they gave the very significant name of Israelites.³

The time came when the Christian priests shed blood enough. The extreme scrupulosity, however, which they at first displayed, is not only exceedingly curious when contrasted with their later history; it was also, by the association of ideas which it promoted, very favourable to humanity. It is remarkable, however, that while some of the early Fathers were

the undoubted precursors of Beccaria, their teaching, unlike that of the philosophers in the eighteenth century, had little or no appreciable influence in mitigating the severity of the penal code. Indeed, the more carefully the Christian legislation of the Empire is examined, and the more fully it is compared with what had been done under the influence of Stoicism by the pagan legislators, the more evident, I think, it will appear that the golden age of Roman law was not Christian, but pagan. Great works of codification were accomplished under the younger Theodosius, and under Justinian; but it was in the reign of pagan emperors, and especially of Hadrian and Alexander Severus, that nearly all the most important measures were taken, redressing injustices, elevating oppressed classes, and making the doctrine of the natural equality and fraternity of mankind the basis of legal enactments. Receiving the heritage of these laws, the Christians, no doubt, added something; but a careful examination will show that it was surprisingly little. In no respect is the greatness of the Stoic philosophers more conspicuous than in the contrast between the gigantic steps of legal reform made in a few years under their influence, and the almost insignificant steps taken when Christianity had obtained an ascendancy in the Empire, not to speak of the long period of decrepitude that followed. In the way of mitigating the severity of punishments, Constantine made, it is true, three important laws prohibiting the custom of branding criminals upon the face, the condemnation of criminals as gladiators, and the continuance of the once degrading but now sacred punishment of crucifixion, which had been very commonly employed; but these measures were more than counterbalanced by the extreme severity with which the Christian emperors punished infanticide, adultery, seduction, rape, and several other crimes, and the number of capital offences became considerably greater than before.⁴ The

¹ "Ut quam clementissime et ultra sanguinis effusionem puniretur."

² *Quæst. Romanæ*, xcvi.

³ Illemonet, *Mém. d'Hist. ecclési.* tome vi. pp. 88-98. The Donatists after a time, however, are said to have overcome their scruples, and used swords.

⁴ Under the Christian kings, the barbarians multiplied the number of capital offences, but this has usually been regarded as an improvement. The Abbé Mabry says: "Quoiqu'il nous reste peu d'ordonnances faites sous les premiers Mérovingiens, nous voyons qu'avant la fin du sixième siècle, les Français avoient déjà adopté la doctrine salutaire des Romains au sujet de la prescription; et que renonçant à cette humanité cruelle qui les enhardissoit au mal, ils infligèrent peine de mort contre l'inceste, le vol et le meurtre, qui jusques-là n'avoient été punis que par l'exil, ou dont on se rachetoit par une composition. Les Français, en réformant

most prominent evidence, indeed, of ecclesiastical influence in the Theodosian Code is that which must be most lamented. It is the immense mass of legislation intended on the one hand to elevate the clergy into a separate and sacred caste, and on the other to persecute in every form, and with every degree of violence, all who deviated from the fine line of Catholic orthodoxy.¹

The last consequence of the Christian estimate of human life was a very emphatic condemnation of suicide. We have already seen that the arguments of the pagan moralists who were opposed to this act were of four kinds. The religious argument of Pythagoras and Plato was that we are all soldiers of God, placed in an appointed post of duty, which it is a rebellion against our Maker to desert. The civic argument of Aristotle and the Greek legislators was that we owe our services to the State, and that therefore voluntarily to abandon life is to abandon our duty to our country. The argument which Plutarch and other writers derived from human dignity was that true courage is shown in the manful endurance of suffering, while suicide, being an act of flight, is an act of cowardice, and therefore unworthy of man. The mystical or Quietist argument of the Neo-Platonists was that all perturbation is a pollution of the soul; that the act of suicide is accompanied by, and springs from, perturbation, and that therefore the perpetrator ends his days by a crime. Of these four arguments, the last cannot, I think, be said to have had any place among the Christian dissuasives from suicide, and the influence of the second was almost imperceptible. The notion of patriotism being a moral duty was habitually discouraged in the early Church; and it was impossible to urge the civic argument against suicide without at the same time condemning the hermit life, which in the third century became the ideal of the Church. The duty a man owes to his family, which a modern moralist would deem the most obvious and, perhaps, the most conclusive proof of the general criminality of suicide, and which may be said to have replaced

the civic argument, was scarcely noticed either by the pagans or the early Christians. The first were accustomed to lay so much stress upon the authority, that they scarcely recognised the duties, of the father; and the latter were too anxious to attach all their ethics to the interests of another world, to do much to supply the omission. The Christian estimate of the duty of humility, and of the degradation of man, rendered appeals to human dignity somewhat uncongenial to the patristic writers; yet these writers frequently dilated upon the true courage of patience, in language to which their own heroism under persecution gave a noble emphasis. To the example of Cato they opposed those of Regulus and Job, the courage that endures suffering to the courage that confronts death. The Platonic doctrine, that we are servants of the Deity, placed upon earth to perform our allotted task in His sight, with His assistance, and by His will, they continually enforced and most deeply realised; and this doctrine was in itself, in most cases, a sufficient preventive; for, as a great writer has said: "Though there are many crimes of a deeper dye than suicide, there is no other by which men appear so formally to renounce the protection of God."²

But, in addition to this general teaching, the Christian theologians introduced into the sphere we are considering new elements both of terrorism and of persuasion, which have had a decisive influence upon the judgments of mankind. They carried their doctrine of the sanctity of human life to such a point that they maintained dogmatically that a man who destroys his own life has committed a crime similar both in kind and magnitude to that of an ordinary murderer,³ and they at the same time gave a new character to death by their doctrines concerning its penal nature and concerning the future destinies of the soul. On the other hand, the high position assigned to resignation in the moral scale, the hope of future happiness, which casts a

¹ Mme. de Staël, *Réflexions sur le Suicide*.

² The following became the theological doctrine on the subject: "Est vero homicida et reus homicidii qui se interficiendo innocentium hominem interfecit." (Lisle, *Du Suicide*, p. 400) St. Augustine has much in this strain. Lucretia, he says, either consented to the act of Sextius, or she did not. In the first case she was an adulteress, and should therefore not be admired. In the second case she was a murderess, because in killing herself she killed an innocent and virtuous woman. (*De Civ. Dei*, i. 19.)

quelques-unes de leurs lois civiles, portèrent la sévérité aussi loin que leurs pères avoient poussé l'indulgence." (Mably, *Observ. sur l'Hist. des Français*, liv. i. ch. iii.) See, too, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, ch. xxxviii.

³ The whole of the sixth volume of Godefroy's edition (folio) of the Theodosian Code is taken up with laws of these kinds.

ray of light upon the darkest calamities of life, the deeper and more subtle consolations arising from the feeling of trust and from the outpouring of prayer, and, above all, the Christian doctrine of the remedial and providential character of suffering, have proved sufficient protection against despair. The Christian doctrine, that pain is a good, had in this respect an influence that was never attained by the pagan doctrine, that pain is not an evil.

There were, however, two forms of suicide which were regarded in the early Church with some tolerance or hesitation. During the frenzy excited by persecution, and under the influence of the belief that martyrdom effaced in a moment the sins of a life, and introduced the sufferer at once into celestial joys, it was not uncommon for men, in a transport of enthusiasm, to rush before the pagan judges, imploring or provoking martyrdom; and some of the ecclesiastical writers have spoken of these men with considerable admiration,¹ though the general tone of the patristic writings and the Councils of the Church condemned them. A more serious difficulty arose about Christian women who committed suicide to guard their chastity when menaced by the infamous sentences of their persecutors, or more frequently by the lust of emperors, or by barbarian invaders. St. Pelagia, a girl of only fifteen, who has been canonised by the Church, and who was warmly eulogised by St. Ambrose and St. Chrysostom, having been captured by the soldiery, obtained permission to retire to her room for the purpose of robing herself, mounted to the roof of the house, and, flinging herself down, perished by the fall.² A Christian lady of Antioch, named Domnina, had two daughters renowned alike for their beauty and their piety. Being captured during the Diocletian persecution, and fearing the loss of their chastity, they agreed by one bold act to free themselves from the danger, and, casting themselves into a river by the way, mother and daughters sank unsullied in the wave.³ The tyrant Maxentius was

fascinated by the beauty of a Christian lady, the wife of the Prefect of Rome. Having sought in vain to elude his addresses, having been dragged from her house by the minions of the tyrant, the faithful wife obtained permission, before yielding to her master's embraces, to retire for a moment into her chamber, and she there, with true Roman courage, stabbed herself to the heart.⁴ Some Protestant controversialists have been scandalised,⁵ and some Catholic controversialists perplexed, by the undisguised admiration with which the early ecclesiastical writers narrate these histories. To those who have not suffered theological opinions to destroy all their natural sense of nobility they will need no defence.

This was the only form of avowed suicide which was in any degree permitted in the early Church. St. Ambrose rather timidly, and St. Jerome more strongly, commended it; but at the time when the capture of Rome by the soldiers of Alaric made the question one of pressing interest, St. Augustine devoted an elaborate examination to the subject, and, while expressing his pitying admiration for the virgin suicides, decidedly condemned their act.⁶ His opinion of the absolute sinfulness of suicide has since been generally adopted by the Catholic theologians, who pretend that Pelagia and Domnina acted under the impulse of a special revelation.⁴ At the same time,

¹ Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.* viii. 14. Bayle, in his article upon Sophronia, appears to be greatly scandalised at this act, and it seems that among the Catholics it is not considered right to admire this poor lady as much as her sister suicides. Tillemont remarks: "Comme on ne voit pas que l'église romaine l'ait jamais honorée, nous n'avons pas le même droit de justifier son action." (*Hist. ecclési.* tome v. pp. 404, 405.)

² Especially Barbeyrac, in his *Morale des Pères*. He was answered by Ceillier, Cromaziano, and others. Matthew of Westminster relates of Ebba, the abbess of a Yorkshire convent which was besieged by the Danes, that she and all the other nuns, to save their chastity, deformed themselves by cutting off their noses and upper lips. (A. D. 870.)

³ *De Civ. Dei*, l. 22-27.

⁴ This had been suggested by St. Augustine. In the case of Pelagia, Tillemont finds a strong argument in support of this view in the astounding, if not miraculous, fact that, having thrown herself from the top of the house, she was actually killed by the fall! "Estant montée tout au haut de sa maison, fortifiée par le mouvement que J.-C. formoit dans son cœur et par le courage qu'il lui inspiroit, elle se précipita de là du haut en bas, et échappa ainsi à tous les pièges de ses ennemis. Son corps en tombant à terre frappa, dit S. Chrysostome, les yeux du démon plus vivement qu'un éclair. Ce qui marque encore que Dieu agissoit en tout ceci, c'est qu'au lieu que ces chutes ne sont pas toujours mortelles, ou que souvent ne brisant que quelques membres, elles n'ontent la vie que longtemps après, ni l'un ni l'autre n'arriva en cette rencontre;

¹ Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Cyprian are especially ardent in this respect; but their language is, I think, in their circumstances, extremely excusable. Compare Barbeyrac, *Morale des Pères*, ch. ii. § 8, ch. vii. §§ 34-39; Donne's *Biathanatos* (ed. 1644), pp. 58-67; Cromaziano, *Istoria critica e filosofica del Suicidio ragionato* (Venezia, 1788), pp. 135-140.

² Ambrose, *De Virginitas*, iii. 7.

³ Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.* viii. 12.

by a glaring though very natural inconsistency, no characters were more enthusiastically extolled than those anchorites who habitually deprived their bodies of the sustenance that was absolutely necessary to health, and thus manifestly abridged their lives. St. Jerome has preserved a curious illustration of the feeling with which these slow suicides were regarded by the outer world, in his account of the life and death of a young nun named Blesilla. This lady had been guilty of what, according to the religious notions of the fourth century, was, at least, the frivolity of marrying, but was left a widow seven months afterwards, having thus "lost at once the crown of virginity and the pleasure of marriage."¹ An attack of illness inspired her with strong religious feelings. At the age of twenty she retired to a convent. She attained such a height of devotion that, according to the very characteristic eulogy of her biographer, "she was more sorry for the loss of her virginity than for the decease of her husband";² and a long succession of atrocious penances preceded, if they did not produce, her death.³ The conviction that she had been killed by fasting, and the spectacle of the uncontrollable grief of her mother, filled the populace with indignation, and the funeral was disturbed by tumultuous cries that the "accursed race of monks should be banished from the city, stoned, or drowned."⁴ In the Church itself, however, we find very few traces of any condemnation of the custom of undermining the constitution by austerities,⁵ and if we may believe but a small part of what is related of the habits of the early and mediæval monks, great numbers of them must have thus shortened their days. There is a touching story told by St. Bonaventura, of St. Francis of Assisi, who was one of these victims to asceticism. As the dying saint sank back exhausted with spitting blood, he avowed, as he looked upon his emaciated body, that

mais Dieu retira aussitôt l'âme de la vainte, en sorte que sa mort parut autant l'effet de la volonté divine que de sa chute" (*Hist. ecclésiast.* tome v. pp. 401-402.)

¹ "Et virginittatis coronam et nuptiarum perdidit voluptatem." (*Ep.* xxii)

² "Quis enim sicis oculis recordetur viginti annorum adolescentulam tam ardenti fide crucis levasse vexillum ut magis amissam virginittatem quam mariti doleret interitum?" (*Ep.* xxxix)

³ For a description of these penances see *Ep.* xxxviii.

⁴ *Ep.* xxxix

⁵ St. Jerome gave some sensible advice on this point to one of his admirers (*Ep.* ccxv.)

"he had sinned against his brother, the ass"; and then, the feeling of his mind taking, as was usual with him, the form of an hallucination, he imagined that, when at prayer during the night, he heard a voice saying: "Francis, there is no sinner in the world whom, if he be converted, God will not pardon; but he who kills himself by hard penances will find no mercy in eternity." He attributed the voice to the devil.¹

Direct and deliberate suicide, which occupies so prominent a place in the moral history of antiquity, almost absolutely disappeared within the Church; but beyond its pale the Circumcelliones, in the fourth century, constituted themselves the apostles of death, and not only carried to the highest point the custom of provoking martyrdom, by challenging and insulting the assemblies of the pagans, but even killed themselves in great numbers, imagining, it would seem, that this was a form of martyrdom, and would secure for them eternal salvation. Assembling in hundreds, St. Augustine says even in thousands, they leaped with paroxysms of frantic joy from the brows of overhanging cliffs, till the rocks below were reddened with their blood.² At a much later period, we find among the Albigenes a practice, known by the name of Endura, of accelerating death, in the case of dangerous illness, by fasting, and sometimes by bleeding.³ The wretched Jews, stung to madness by the persecution of the Catholics, furnish the most numerous examples of suicide during the Middle Ages. A multitude perished by their own hands, to avoid torture, in France, in 1095; five hundred, it is said, on a single occasion at York; five hundred in 1320, when besieged by the Shepherds. The old pagan legislation on this subject remained unaltered in the Theodosian and Justinian Codes; but a Council of Arles, in the fifth century, having pronounced suicide to be the effect of diabolical inspiration, a Council of Bragues, in the following century, ordained that no religious rites should be celebrated at the tomb of the culprit, and that no masses should be said for his soul; and these provisions, which were repeated by later Councils, were gradually

¹ Hase, *St. François d'Assise*, pp. 137-138. St. Palæmon is said to have died of his austerities. (*Vit. S. Pachomi*)

² St. Augustine and St. Optatus have given accounts of these suicides in their works against the Donatists.

³ See Todd's *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 462.

introduced into the laws of the barbarians and of Charlemagne. St. Louis originated the custom of confiscating the property of the dead man, and the corpse was soon subjected to gross and various outrages. In some countries it could only be removed from the house through a perforation specially made for the occasion in the wall; it was dragged upon a hurdle through the streets, hung up with the head downwards, and at last thrown into the public sewer, or burnt, or buried in the sand below high-water mark, or transfixed by a stake on the public highway.¹

These singularly hideous and at the same time grotesque customs, and also the extreme injustice of reducing to beggary the unhappy relations of the dead, had the very natural effect of exciting, in the eighteenth century, a strong spirit of reaction. Suicide is, indeed, one of those acts which may be condemned by moralists as a sin, but which, in modern times at least, cannot be regarded as within the legitimate sphere of law; for a society which accords to its members perfect liberty of emigration cannot reasonably pronounce the simple renunciation of life to be an offence against itself. When, however, Beccaria and his followers went further, and maintained that the mediæval laws on the subject were as impotent as they were revolting, they fell, I think, into serious error. The outrages lavished upon the corpse of the suicide, though in the first instance an expression of the popular horror of his act, contributed, by the associations they formed, to strengthen the feeling that produced them, and they were also peculiarly fitted to scare the diseased, excited, and over-sensitive imaginations that are most prone to suicide. In the rare occasions when the act was deliberately contemplated, the knowledge that religious, legislative, and social influences would combine to aggra-

vate to the utmost the agony of the surviving relatives, must have had great weight. The activity of the legislature shows the continuance of the act; but we have every reason to believe that within the pale of Catholicism it was for many centuries extremely rare. It is said to have been somewhat prevalent in Spain in the last and most corrupt period of the Gothic kingdom,² and many instances occurred during a great pestilence which raged in England in the seventh century,³ and also during the Black Death of the fourteenth century.⁴ When the wives of priests were separated in vast numbers from their husbands by Hildebrand, and driven into the world blasted, heart-broken, and hopeless, not a few of them shortened their agony by suicide.⁵ Among women it was in general especially rare; and a learned historian of suicide has even asserted that a Spanish lady, who, being separated from her husband and finding herself unable to resist the energy of her passions, killed herself rather than yield to temptation, is the only instance of female suicide during several centuries.⁶ In the romances of chivalry, however, this mode of death is frequently "portrayed without horror," and its criminality was discussed at considerable length by Abelard and St. Thomas Aquinas, while Dante has devoted some fine lines to painting the condition of suicides in hell, where they are also frequently represented in the bas-reliefs of cathedrals. A melancholy leading to desperation, and known to theologians under the name of "acedia," was not uncommon in monasteries, and most of the recorded instances of mediæval suicides in Catholicism were by monks. The frequent suicides of monks, sometimes to escape the world, sometimes

¹ See the very interesting work of the Abbé Bourret, *L'Ecole chrétienne de Séville sous la monarchie des Visigoths* (Paris, 1855), p. 196.

² Roger of Wendover, A.D. 665.

³ Esquirol, *Maladies mentales*, tome i. p. 591.

⁴ Lea's *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy* (Philadelphia, 1867), p. 228.

⁵ "Per lo corso di molti secoli abbiamo questo solo suicidio donnesco, e buona cosa è non averne più d'uno; perchè io non credo che la impudicizia istessa sia peggiore di questa disperata castità." (Cromaziano, *Ist. del Suicidio*, p. 126.) Mariana, who, under the frock of a Jesuit, bore the heart of an ancient Roman, treats the case in a very different manner. "Ejus uxor Maria Coronelia cum mariti absentiam non ferret, ne pravis cupiditatibus cederet, vitam posuit, ardentem forte libidinem igne extinguens adacto per muliebria titone; dignam meliori seculo feminam, insignis studium castitatis." (*De Rebus Hispan.* xvi. 17.)

⁶ A number of passages are cited by Bourquelot.

² The whole history of suicide in the dark ages has been most minutely and carefully examined by M. Bourquelot, in a very interesting series of memoirs in the third and fourth volumes of the *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes*. I am much indebted to these memoirs in the following pages. See, too, Lisle, *Du Suicide, Statistique, Médecine, Histoire, et Législation*. (Paris, 1856.) The ferocious laws here recounted contrast remarkably with a law in the Capitularies (lib. vi. lex 70), which provides that, though mass may not be celebrated for a suicide, any private person may, through charity, cause prayers to be offered up for his soul, "quia incomprehensibilia sunt iudicia Dei, et profunditatem consilii ejus nemo potest investigare."

through despair at their inability to quell the propensities of the body, sometimes through insanity produced by their mode of life, and by their dread of surrounding demons, were noticed in the early Church,¹ and a few examples have been gleaned, from the mediæval chronicles,² of suicides produced by the bitterness of hopeless love, or by the derangement that follows extreme austerity. These are, however, but, few; and it is probable that the monasteries, by providing a refuge for the disappointed and the broken-hearted, have prevented more suicides than they have caused, and that, during the whole period of Catholic ascendancy, the act was more rare than before or after. The influence of Catholicism was seconded by Mohammedanism, which, on this as on many other points, borrowed its teaching from the Christian Church, and even intensified it; for suicide, which is never expressly condemned in the Bible, is more than once forbidden in the Koran, and the Christian duty of resignation was exaggerated by the Moslem into a complete fatalism. Under the empire of Catholicism and Mohammedanism, suicide, during many centuries, almost absolutely ceased in all the civilised, active, and progressive part of mankind. When we recollect how warmly it was applauded, or how faintly it was condemned, in the civilisation of Greece and Rome; when we remember, too, that there was scarcely a barbarous tribe, from Denmark to Spain, who did not habitually practise it,³ we may realise the

complete revolution which was effected in this sphere by the influence of Christianity.

A few words may be added on the later phases of this mournful history. The Reformation does not seem to have had any immediate effect in multiplying suicide, for Protestants and Catholics held with equal intensity the religious sentiments which are most fitted to prevent it, and in none of the persecutions was impatience of life largely displayed. The history at this period passes chiefly into the New World, where the unhappy Indians, reduced to slavery, and treated with atrocious cruelty by their conquerors, killed themselves in great numbers; till the Spaniards, it is said, discovered an ingenious method of deterring them, by declaring that the master also would commit suicide, and would pursue his victims into the world of spirits.⁴ In Europe the act was very common among the witches, who underwent all the sufferings with none of the consolations of martyrdom. Without enthusiasm, without hope, without even the consciousness of innocence, decrepit in body and distracted in mind, compelled in this world to endure tortures before which the most impassioned heroism might quail, and doomed, as they often believed, to eternal damnation in the next, they not unfrequently killed themselves in the agony of their despair. A French judge named Remy tells us that he knew no less than fifteen witches commit suicide in a single year.⁵ In these cases, fear and madness combined in urging the victims to the deed. Epidemics of purely insane suicide have also not unfrequently occurred. Both the women of Marseilles and the women of Lyons were afflicted with an epidemic not unlike that which, in antiquity, had been noticed among the girls of Miletus.⁶

¹ This is noticed by St. Gregory Nazianzen in a little poem which is given in Migne's edition of *The Greek Fathers*, tome xxxvii. p. 1459. St. Nilus and the biographer of St. Pachomius speak of these suicides, and St. Chrysostom wrote a letter of consolation to a young monk, named Stagirus, which is still extant, encouraging him to resist the temptation. See Neander, *Ecclesiastical Hist.* vol. iii. pp. 319, 320.

² Bourquelot. Pinel notices (*Traité médico-philosophique sur l'Aliénation mentale*, 2d ed., pp. 44-46) the numerous cases of insanity still produced by strong religious feeling; and the history of the movements called "revivals," in the present (nineteenth) century, supplies much evidence to the same effect. Pinel says, religious insanity tends peculiarly to suicide (p. 265).

³ Orosius notices (*Hist.* v. 14) that of all the Gauls conquered by Q. Marcus, there were none who did not prefer death to slavery. The Spaniards were famous for their suicides, to avoid old age as well as slavery. Odin, who, under different names, was the supreme divinity of most of the Northern tribes, is said to have ended his earthly life by suicide. Boadicea, the grandest figure of early British history, and Cordelia, or Cordelia, the most pathetic figure of early British romance, were both suicides. (See, on the first, Tacitus, *Ann.* xiv. 35-37; and, on the second, Geoffrey of Monmouth, *ll.* 15—a version from which Shakespeare has considerably diverged, but which is faithfully followed by Spenser (*Faery Queen*, book ii. canto 10).

⁴ "In our age, when the Spaniards extended that law which was made only against the cannibals, that they who would not accept the Christian religion should incur bondage, the Indians in infinite numbers escaped this by killing themselves, and never ceased till the Spaniards, by some counterfeiting, made them think that they also would kill themselves, and follow them with the same severity into the next life." (Donne's *Biathanatos*, p. 56, ed. 1644). On the evidence of the early travellers on this point, see the essay on "England's Forgotten Worthies," in Mr. Froude's *Short Studies*.

⁵ Lisle, pp. 427-434. Sprenger has noticed the same tendency among the witches he tried. See Calmeil, *De la Folie* (Paris, 1845), tome i. pp. 161, 303-305.

⁶ On modern suicides the reader may consult Winslow's *Anatomy of Suicide*; as well as the work of

In that strange mania which raged in the Neapolitan districts from the end of the fifteenth to the end of the seventeenth century, and which was attributed to the bite of the tarantula, the patients thronged in multitudes towards the sea, and often, as the blue waters opened to their view, they chanted a wild hymn of welcome, and rushed with passion into the waves.¹ But together with these cases, which belong rather to the history of medicine than to that of morals, we find many facts exhibiting a startling increase of deliberate suicide, and a no less startling modification of the sentiments with which it was regarded. The revival of classical learning, and the growing custom of regarding Greek and Roman heroes as ideals, necessarily brought the subject into prominence. The Catholic casuists, and at a later period philosophers of the school of Grotius and Puffendorf, began to distinguish certain cases of legitimate suicide, such as that committed to avoid dishonour or probable sin, or that of the soldier who fires a mine, knowing he must inevitably perish by the explosion, or that of a condemned person who saves himself from torture by anticipating an inevitable fate, or that of a man who offers himself to death for his friend.² The effect of the pagan examples may frequently be detected in the last words or writings of the suicides. Philip Strozzi, when accused of the assassination of Alexander I. of Tuscany, killed himself through fear that torture might extort from him revelations injurious to his friends, and he left behind him a paper in which, among other things, he commended his soul to God, with the prayer that, if no higher boon could be granted, he might at least be permitted to have his place with Cato of Utica and the other great suicides of antiquity.³ In England, the act appears in the seventeenth century and in the first half of the eighteenth to have been more common

than upon the Continent,⁴ and several partial or even unqualified apologies for it were written. Sir Thomas More, in his *Utopia*, represented the priests and magistrates of his ideal republic permitting or even enjoining those who were afflicted with incurable disease to kill themselves, but depriving of burial those who had done so without authorisation.⁵ Dr. Donne, the learned and pious Dean of St. Paul's, had in his youth written an extremely curious, subtle, and learned, but at the same time feeble and involved, work in defence of suicide, which on his deathbed he commanded his son neither to publish nor destroy, and which his son published in 1644. Two or three English suicides left behind them elaborate defences, as did also a Swede named Robeck, who drowned himself in 1735, and whose treatise, published in the following year, acquired considerable celebrity.⁶ But the most influential writings about suicide were those of the French philosophers and revolutionists. Montaigne, without discussing its abstract lawfulness, recounts, with much admiration, many of the instances in antiquity.⁷ Montesquieu, in a youthful work, defended it with ardent enthusiasm.⁸ Rousseau devoted to the subject two letters of a burning and passionate eloquence,⁹ in the first of

¹ Montesquieu, and many Continental writers, have noticed this, and most English writers of the eighteenth century seem to admit the charge. There do not appear, however, to have been any accurate statistics, and the general statements are very untrustworthy. Suicides were supposed to be especially numerous under the depressing influence of English winter fogs. The statistics made in the present [nineteenth] century prove beyond question that they are most numerous in summer.

² *Utopia*, book ii. ch. vi.

³ A sketch of his life, which was rather curious, is given by Cromaziano, pp. 148-151. There is a long note on the early literature in defence of suicide, in Dumas, *Traité du Suicide* (Amsterdam, 1723), pp. 148-149. Dumas was a Protestant minister who wrote against suicide. Among the English apologists for suicide (which he himself committed) was Blount, the translator of the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, and Creech, an editor of Lucretius. Concerning the former there is a note in Bayle's *Dict. art.* "Apollonius." The latter is noticed by Voltaire in his *Lettres Philos.* He wrote as a memorandum on the margin of his *Lucretius*, "N.B. When I have finished my Commentary I must kill myself"; which he accordingly did—Voltaire says to imitate his favourite author. (Voltaire, *Dict. phil. art.* "Caton.")

⁴ *Essais*, liv. ii. ch. xiii.

⁵ *Lettres persanes*, lxxvi.

⁶ *Nouvelle Héloïse*, partie iii. let. 21-22. Esquirol gives a curious illustration of the way the influence of Rousseau penetrated through all classes. A little child of thirteen committed suicide, leaving a writing beginning: "Je lègue mon âme à Rousseau, mon corps à la terre." (*Maladies mentales*, tome i. p. 588.)

M Lisle, and also Esquirol, *Maladies mentales* (Paris, 1838), tome i. pp. 526-676.

⁷ Hecker's *Epidemics of the Middle Ages* (London, 1844), p. 121. Hecker, in his very curious essay on this mania, has preserved a verse of their song—

"Allu mari mî portati
Se voleti che mi sanati,
Allu mari, alla via,
Così m'ama la donna mia,
Allu mari, allu mari,
Mentre campo, t'aggio amari."

⁸ Cromaziano, *Ist. del Suicidio*, caps. viii. ix.

⁹ Cromaziano, pp. 92-93.

which he presented with matchless power the arguments in its favour, while in the second he denounced those arguments as sophistical, dilated upon the impiety of abandoning the post of duty, and upon the cowardice of despair, and with a deep knowledge of the human heart revealed the selfishness that lies at the root of most suicide, exhorting all who felt impelled to it to set about some work for the good of others, in which they would assuredly find relief. Voltaire, in the best-known couplet he ever wrote, defends the act on occasions of extreme necessity.¹ Among the atheistical party it was warmly eulogised, and Holbach and Deslandes were prominent as its defenders. The rapid decomposition of religious opinions weakened the popular sense of its enormity, and at the same time the humanity of the age, and also a clearer sense of the true limits of legislation, produced a reaction against the horrible laws on the subject. Grotius had defended them. Montesquieu at first denounced them with unqualified energy, but in his later years in some degree modified his opinions. Beccaria, who was, more than any other writer, the representative of the opinions of the French school on such matters, condemned them partly as unjust to the innocent survivors, partly as incapable of deterring any man who was resolved upon the act. Even in 1749, in the full blaze of the philosophic movement, we find a suicide named Portier dragged through the streets of Paris with his face to the ground, hung from a gallows by his feet, and then thrown into the sewers;² and the laws were not abrogated till the Revolution, which, having founded so many other forms of freedom, accorded the liberty of death. Amid the dramatic vicissitudes and the fierce enthusiasm of that period of convulsions, suicides immediately multiplied. "The world," it was said, had been "empty since the Romans."³ For a brief period, and in this one country, the action of Christianity appeared suspended. Men seemed to be transported again into the age of paganism, and the suicides, though more theatrical, were

perpetrated with no less deliberation, and eulogised with no less enthusiasm, than among the Stoics. But the tide of revolution passed away, and with some qualifications the old opinions resumed their authority. The laws against suicide were, indeed, for the most part abolished. In France and several other lands there exists no legislation on the subject. In other countries the law simply enjoins burial without religious ceremonies. In England, the burial in a highway and the mutilation by a stake were abolished under George IV.; but the monstrous injustice of confiscating to the Crown the entire property of the deliberate suicide, though it had long been inoperative, was only formally removed by the Act of 1870, abolishing forfeitures for felony.

The common sentiment of Christendom has, however, ratified the judgment which the Christian teachers pronounced upon the act, though it has somewhat modified the severity of the old censure, and has abandoned some of the old arguments. It was reserved for Madame de Stael, who, in a youthful work upon the Passions, had commended suicide, to reconstruct this department of ethics, which had been somewhat disturbed by the Revolution; and she did so in a little treatise which is a model of calm, candid, and philosophic piety. Frankly abandoning the old theological notions that the deed is of the nature of murder, that it is the worst of crimes, and that it is always—or even generally—the offspring of cowardice; abandoning, too, all attempts to scare men by religious terrorism, she proceeded, not so much to meet in detail the isolated arguments of its defenders as to sketch the ideal of a truly virtuous man, and to show how such a character would secure men against all temptation to suicide. In pages of the most tender beauty she traced the influence of suffering in softening, purifying, and deepening the character, and showed how a frame of habitual and submissive resignation was not only the highest duty but also the source of the purest consolation, and at the same time the appointed condition of moral amelioration. Having examined in detail the Biblical aspect of the question, she proceeded to show how the true measure of the dignity of man is his unselfishness. She contrasted the martyr with the suicide—the death which springs from devotion to duty with the death that springs from rebellion against

¹ In general, however, Voltaire was extremely opposed to the philosophy of despair, but he certainly approved of some forms of suicide. See the articles "Caton" and "Suicide," in his *Dict. philos.*

² Lisle, *Du Suicide*, pp. 411, 412.

³ "Le monde est vide depuis les Romains," (St.-Just, *Procès de Danton*.)

circumstances. The suicide of Cato, which had been absurdly denounced by a crowd of ecclesiastics as an act of cowardice, and as absurdly alleged by many suicides as a justification for flying from pain or poverty, she represented as an act of martyrdom—a death like that of Curtius, accepted nobly for the benefit of Rome. The eye of the good man should be forever fixed upon the interest of others. For them he should be prepared to relinquish life with all its blessings. For them he should be prepared to tolerate life, even when it seemed to him a curse.

Sentiments of this kind have, through the influence of Christianity, thoroughly pervaded European society, and suicide, in modern times, is almost always found to have sprung either from absolute insanity; from diseases which, though not amounting to insanity, are yet sufficient to discolour our judgments; or from that last excess of sorrow when resignation and hope are both extinct. Considering it in this light, I know few things more fitted to qualify the optimism we so often hear than the fact that statistics show it to be rapidly increasing, and to be peculiarly characteristic of those nations which rank most high in intellectual development and in general civilisation.¹ In one or two countries strong religious feeling has counteracted the tendency; but the comparison of town and country, of different countries, of different provinces of the same country, and of different periods in history, proves conclusively its reality. Many reasons may be alleged to explain it. Mental occupations are peculiarly fitted to produce insanity,² and the blaze of publicity, which in modern times encircles an act of suicide, to draw weak minds to its imitation. If we put the condition of absolutely savage life out of our calculation, it is probable that a highly-developed civilisation, while it raises the average of well-being, is accompanied by more extreme misery and acute sufferings than the simpler stages that had preceded it. Nomadic habits, the vast agglomeration of men in cities, the pressure of a fierce

competition, and the sudden fluctuations to which manufactures are peculiarly liable, are the conditions of great prosperity, but also the causes of the most profound misery. Civilisation makes many of what once were superfluities necessities of life, so that their loss inflicts a pang long after their possession had ceased to be a pleasure. It also, by softening the character, renders it peculiarly sensitive to pain, and it brings with it a long train of antipathies, passions, and diseased imaginations, which rarely or never cross the thoughts or torture the nerves of the simple peasant. The advance of religious scepticism and the relaxation of religious discipline have weakened, and sometimes destroyed, the horror of suicide; and the habits of self-assertion, the eager and restless ambitions which political liberty, intellectual activity, and manufacturing enterprise all in their different ways conspire to foster, while they are the very principles and conditions of the progress of our age, render the virtue of content in all its forms extremely rare, and are peculiarly unpropitious to the formation of that spirit of humble and submissive resignation which alone can mitigate the agony of hopeless suffering.

From examining the effect of Christianity in promoting a sense of the sanctity of human life, we may now pass to an adjoining field, and examine its influence in promoting a fraternal and philanthropic sentiment among mankind. And first of all we may notice its effects upon slavery.

The reader will remember the general position this institution occupied in the eyes of the Stoic moralists, and under the legislation which they had in a great measure inspired. The legitimacy of slavery was fully recognised; but Seneca and other moralists had asserted in the very strongest terms the natural equality of mankind, the superficial character of the differences between the slave and his master, and the duty of the most scrupulous humanity to the former. Instances of a very warm sympathy between master and slave were of frequent occurrence; but they may, unfortunately, be paralleled by not a few examples of the most atrocious cruelty. To guard against such cruelty a long series of enactments, based avowedly upon the Stoical principle of the essential equality of mankind, had been

¹ This fact has been often noticed. The reader may find many statistics on the subject in Lisle, *Du Suicide*, and Winslow's *Anatomy of Suicide*.

² "There seems good reason to believe that with the progress of mental development through the ages there is, as is the case with other forms of organic development, a correlative degeneration going on, and that an increase of insanity is a penalty which an increase of our present civilisation necessarily pays." (Maudsley's *Physiology of Mind*, p. 301.)

made under Hadrian, the Antonines, and Alexander Severus. Not to recapitulate at length what has been mentioned in a former chapter, it is sufficient to remind the reader that the right of life and death had been definitely withdrawn from the master, and that the murder of a slave was stigmatised and punished by the law. It had, however, been laid down by the great lawyer Paul that homicide implies an intention to kill, and that, therefore, the master was not guilty of that crime if his slave died under chastisement which was not administered with this intention. But the licence of punishment which this decision might give was checked by laws which forbade excessive cruelty to slaves, provided that, when it was proved, they should be sold to another master, suppressed the private prisons in which they had been immured, and appointed special officers to receive their complaints.

In the field of legislation, for about two hundred years after the conversion of Constantine, the progress was extremely slight. The Christian emperors, in A.D. 319 and 326, adverted in two elaborate laws to the subject of the murder of slaves;¹ but, beyond reiterating in very emphatic terms the previous enactments, it is not easy to see in what way they improved the condition of the class.² They provided that any master who applied to his slave certain atrocious tortures, that are enumerated, with the object of killing him, should be deemed a homicide; but if the slave died under moderate punishment, or under any punishment not intended to kill him, the master should be blameless; no charge whatever, it was emphatically said, should be brought against him. It has been supposed, though I think without evidence, by commentators³ that this law accorded immunity to the master only when the slave perished under the application of "appropriate" or servile punishments—that is to say, scourging, irons, or imprisonment; but the use of torture not intended to kill was in no degree restricted, nor is there anything in the law to make it appear either that the master was

liable to punishment if, contrary to his intention, his slave succumbed beneath torture, or that Constantine proposed any penalty for excessive cruelty which did not result in death. It is, perhaps, not out of place to observe that this law was in remarkable harmony with the well-known article of the Jewish code, which provided that if a slave, wounded to death by his master, lingered for a day or two, the master should not be punished, for the slave was his money.⁴

The two features that were most revolting in the slave system, as it passed from the pagan to the Christian emperors, were the absolute want of legal recognition of slave marriage and the license of torturing still conceded to the master. The Christian emperors before Justinian took no serious steps to remedy either of these evils, and the measures that were taken against adultery still continued inapplicable to slave unions, because "the vileness of their condition makes them unworthy of the observation of the law."⁵ The abolition of the punishment of crucifixion had, however, a special value to the slave class, and a very merciful law of Constantine forbade the separation of the families of the slaves.⁶ Another law, which in its effects was perhaps still more important, imparted a sacred character to manumission, ordaining that the ceremony should be celebrated in the church,⁷ and permitting it on Sundays. Some measures were also taken providing for the freedom of the Christian slaves of Jewish masters, and in two or three cases freedom was offered as a bribe to slaves to induce them to inform against criminals. Intermarriage between the free and slave classes was still strictly forbidden, and if a free woman had improper intercourse with her slave, Constantine ordered that the woman should be executed and the slave burnt alive.⁸ By

¹ Exodus xxi. 21.

² "Quas vilitates vite dignas legum observatione non credidit." (*Cod. Theod. lib. ix. tit. 7.*) See on this law, Wallon, tome iii. pp. 417, 418.

Dean Milman observes, "In the old Roman society in the Eastern Empire this distinction between the marriage of the freeman and the concubinage of the slave was long recognised by Christianity itself. These unions were not blessed, as the marriages of their superiors had soon begun to be, by the Church. Basil the Macedonian (A.D. 867-886) first enacted that the priestly benediction should hallow the marriage of the slave; but the authority of the emperor was counteracted by the deep-rooted prejudices of centuries." (*Hist. of Latin Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 15.)

³ *Cod. Theod. lib. ii. tit. 25.*

⁴ *Ibid. lib. iv. tit. 7.*

⁵ *Ibid. lib. ix. tit. 9.*

¹ *Cod. Theod. lib. ix. tit. 12.*

² Some commentators imagine (see Muratori, *Antich. Ital. Diss. xiv.*) that among the pagans the murder of a man's own slave was only assimilated to the crime of murdering the slave of another man, while in the Christian law it was defined as homicide, equivalent to the murder of a freeman. I confess, however, that this point does not appear to me at all clear.

³ See Godefroy's *Commentary* on these laws.

the pagan law the woman had been simply reduced to slavery. The laws against fugitive slaves were also rendered more severe.¹

This legislation may, on the whole, be looked upon as a progress, but it certainly does not deserve the enthusiasm which ecclesiastical writers have sometimes bestowed upon it. For about two hundred years there was an almost absolute pause in the legislation on this subject. Some slight restrictions were, however, imposed upon the use of torture in trials; some slight additional facilities of manumission were given, and some very atrocious enactments made to prevent slaves accusing their masters. According to that of Gratian, any slave who accused his master of any offence, except high treason, should immediately be burnt alive, without any investigation of the justice of the charge.²

Under Justinian, however, new and very important measures were taken. In no other sphere were the laws of this emperor so indisputably an advance upon those of his predecessors. His measures may be comprised under three heads. In the first place, all the restrictions upon enfranchisement which had accumulated under the pagan legislation were abolished; the legislator proclaimed in emphatic language, and by the provisions of many laws, his desire to encourage manumission, and free scope was thus given to the action of the Church. In the second place, the freedmen, considered as an intermediate class between the slave and the citizen, were virtually abolished, all or nearly all the privileges accorded to the citizen being granted to the emancipated slave. This was the most important contribution of the Christian emperors to that great amalgamation of nations and classes which had been advancing since the days of Augustus; and one of its effects was that any person, even of senatorial rank, might marry a slave when he had first emancipated her. In the third place, a slave was permitted to marry a free woman with the authorisation of his master, and children born in slavery became the legal heirs of their emancipated father. The rape of a slave woman was also in this reign punished, like that of a free woman, by death.³

But, important as were these measures, it is not in the field of legislation that we must chiefly look for the influence of Christianity upon slavery. This influence was, indeed, very great, but it is necessary carefully to define its nature. The prohibition of all slavery, which was one of the peculiarities of the Jewish Essenes, and the illegitimacy of hereditary slavery, which was one of the speculations of the Stoic Dion Chrysostom, had no place in the ecclesiastical teaching. Slavery was distinctly and formally recognised by Christianity,⁴ and no religion ever laboured more to encourage a habit of docility and passive obedience. Much was, indeed, said by the Fathers about the natural equality of mankind, about the duty of regarding slaves as brothers or companions, and about the heinousness of cruelty to them; but all this had been said with at least equal force, though it had not been disseminated over an equally wide area, by Seneca and Epicure, and the principle of the original freedom of all men was repeatedly averred by the pagan lawyers. The services of Christianity in this sphere were of three kinds. It supplied a new order of relations, in which the distinction of classes was unknown. It imparted a moral dignity to the servile classes, and it gave an unexampled impetus to the movement of enfranchisement.

The first of these services was effected by the Church ceremonies and the penitential discipline. In these spheres, from which the Christian mind derived its earliest, its deepest, and its most enduring impressions, the difference between the master and his slave was unknown. They received the sacred elements together, they sat side by side at the agape, they mingled in the public prayers. In the penal system of the Church, the distinction between wrongs done to a freeman and wrongs done to a slave, which lay at the very root of the whole civil legislation, was repudiated. At a time when, by the civil law, a master, whose slave died as a consequence of excessive scourging, was absolutely unpunished, the Council of Illiberis excluded that master for ever from the communion.⁵ The chastity of

¹ It is worthy of notice, too, that the justice of slavery was frequently based by the Fathers, as by modern defenders of slavery, on the curse of Ham. See a number of passages noticed by Moehler, *Le Christianisme et l'Esclavage* (trad. franç.), pp. 151-152.

² The penalty, however, appears to have been

¹ *Corpus Juris*, vi. 1.

² *Cod Theod* lib vi. tit. 2.

³ See, on all this legislation, Wallonf tome iii., Champagny, *Charité chrétienne*, pp. 214-224.

female slaves, for the protection of which the civil law made but little provision, was sedulously guarded by the legislation of the Church. Slave birth, moreover, was no disqualification for entering into the priesthood; and an emancipated slave, regarded as the dispenser of spiritual life and death, often saw the greatest and the most wealthy kneeling humbly at his feet imploring his absolution or his benediction.¹

In the next place, Christianity imparted a moral dignity to the servile class. It did this not only by associating poverty and labour with that monastic life which was so profoundly revered, but also by introducing new modifications into the ideal type of morals. There is no fact more prominent in the Roman writers than the profound contempt with which they regarded slaves, not so much on account of their position, as on account of the character which that position had formed. A servile character was a synonym for a vicious one. Cicero had declared that nothing great or noble could exist in a slave, and the plays of Plautus exhibit the same estimate in every scene. There were, it is true, some exceptions. Epictetus had not only been, but had been recognised as, one of the noblest characters of Rome. The fidelity of slaves to their masters had been frequently extolled, and Seneca, in this as in other respects, had been the defender of the oppressed. Still there can be no doubt that this contempt was general, and also that in the pagan world it was to a great extent just. Every age has its own moral ideal, to which all virtuous men aspire. Every sphere of life has also a tendency to produce a distinctive type, being specially favourable to some particular class of virtues and specially unfavourable to others. The popular estimate, and even the real moral condition, of each class depends chiefly upon the degree in which the type of character

its position naturally develops, coincides with the ideal type of the age. Now, if we remember that magnanimity, self-reliance, dignity, independence, and, in a word, elevation of character, constituted the Roman ideal of perfection, it will appear evident that this was pre-eminently the type of freemen, and that the condition of slavery was in the very highest degree unfavourable to its development. Christianity for the first time gave the servile virtues the foremost place in the moral type. Humility, obedience, gentleness, patience, resignation, are all cardinal or rudimentary virtues in the Christian character; they were all neglected or underrated by the pagans; they can all expand and flourish in a servile position.

The influence of Christianity upon slavery, by inclining the moral type to the servile classes, though less obvious and less discussed than some others, is, I believe, in the very highest degree important. There is, probably, scarcely any other single circumstance that exercises so profound an influence upon the social and political relations of a religion, as the class type with which it can most readily assimilate; or, in other words, the group or variety of virtues to which it gives the foremost place. The virtues that are most suited to the servile position were in general so little honoured by antiquity that they were not even cultivated in their appropriate sphere. The aspirations of good men were in a different direction. The virtue of the Stoic, which rose triumphantly under adversity, nearly always withered under degradation. For the first time, under the influence of Christianity, a great moral movement passed through the servile class. The multitude of slaves who embraced the new faith was one of the reproaches of the pagans; and the names of Blandina, Potamiana, Eutyches, Victorinus, and Nereus show how fully they shared in the sufferings and in the glory of martyrdom.² The first and grandest edifice of Byzantine architecture in Italy—the noble church of St. Vitale, at Ravenna—was dedicated by Justinian to the memory of a martyred slave.

While Christianity thus broke down the contempt with which the master had regarded his slaves, and planted among the latter a principle of moral regenera-

reduced to two years' exclusion from communion Muratori says: "In pub consili si truova decretato, 'excommunicatione vel poenitentia biennii esse subijciendum qui servum proprium sine conscientia judicis occiderit.'" (*Antich Ital Diss.* xiv.)

Besides the works which treat generally of the penitential discipline, the reader may consult with fruit Wright's letter *On the Political Condition of the English Peasantry*, and Moehler, *Le Christianisme et l'Esclavage*, pp. 177-178. Leo the Great tried to prevent slaves being raised to the priestly office, because it would degrade the latter.

¹ See a most admirable dissertation on this subject in Le Blaut, *Inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule*, tome ii. pp. 284-299, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, ch. xxxviii.

tion which expanded in no other sphere with an equal perfection, its action in procuring the freedom of the slave was unceasing. The law of Constantine, which placed the ceremony under the superintendence of the clergy, and the many laws that gave special facilities of manumission to those who desired to enter the monasteries or the priesthood, symbolised the religious character the act had assumed. It was celebrated on Church festivals, especially at Easter; and, although it was not proclaimed a matter of duty or necessity, it was always regarded as one of the most acceptable modes of expiating past sins. St. Melania was said to have emancipated 8,000 slaves; St. Ovidius, a rich martyr of Gaul, 5,000; Chromatius, a Roman prefect under Diocletian, 1,400; Hermes, a prefect in the reign of Trajan, 1,250.¹ Pope St. Gregory, many of the clergy at Hippo under the rule of St. Augustine, as well as great numbers of private individuals, freed their slaves as an act of piety.² It became customary to do so on occasions of national or personal thanksgiving, on recovery from sickness, on the birth of a child, at the hour of death, and, above all, in testamentary bequests.³ Numerous charters and epitaphs still record the gift of liberty to slaves throughout the Middle Ages, "for the benefit of the soul" of the donor or testator. In the thirteenth century, when there were no slaves to emancipate in France, it was usual in many churches to release caged pigeons on the ecclesiastical festivals, in memory of the ancient charity, and that prisoners might still be freed in the name of Christ.⁴

Slavery, however, lasted in Europe for about 800 years after Constantine, and during the period with which alone this volume is concerned, although its character was changed and mitigated, the number of men who were subject to it

was probably greater than in the pagan Empire. In the West the barbarian conquests modified the conditions of labour in two directions. The cessation of the stream of barbarian captives, the impoverishment of great families, who had been surrounded by vast retinues of slaves, the general diminution of town life, and the barbarian habits of personal independence, checked the old form of slavery, while the misery and the precarious condition of the free peasants induced them in great numbers to barter their liberty for protection by the neighbouring lord.¹ In the East the destruction of great fortunes through excessive taxation diminished the number of superfluous slaves; and the fiscal system of the Byzantine Empire, by which agricultural slaves were taxed according to their employments,² as well as the desire of emperors to encourage agriculture, led the legislators to attach the slaves permanently to the soil. In the course of time, almost the entire free peasantry, and the greater number of the old slaves, had sunk or risen into the qualified slavery called serfdom, which formed the basis of the great edifice of feudalism. Towards the end of the eighth century the sale of slaves beyond their native provinces was in most countries prohibited.³ The creation of the free cities of Italy, the custom of emancipating slaves who were enrolled in the army, and economical changes which made free labour more profitable than slave labour, conspired with religious motives in effecting the ultimate freedom of labour. The practice of manumitting, as an act of devotion, continued to the end; but the ecclesiastics, probably through the feeling that they had no right to alienate corporate property in which they had only a life interest, were among the last to follow the counsels they so liberally bestowed upon the laity.⁴ In the twelfth

¹ Champaguy, *Charité chrétienne*, p. 210. These numbers are, no doubt, exaggerated; see Wallon, *Hist. de l'Esclavage*, tome iii p. 38.

² See Schmidt, *La Société civile dans le Monde romain*, pp. 246-248.

³ Muratori has devoted two valuable dissertations (*Antich. Ital.* xiv., xv.) to mediæval slavery.

⁴ Ozanam's *Hist. of Civilisation in the Fifth Century* (Eng. trans.), vol. ii, p. 43. St. Adelbert, Archbishop of Prague at the end of the tenth century, was especially famous for his opposition to the slave trade. In Sweden the abolition of slavery in the thirteenth century was avowedly accomplished in obedience to Christian principles. (Moehler, *Le Christianisme et l'Esclavage*, pp. 194-196; Ryan's *History of the Effects of Religion upon Mankind*, pp. 142, 143.)

¹ Salvian, in a famous passage (*De Gubernatione Dei*, lib. v.), notices the multitudes of poor who voluntarily became "coloni" for the sake of protection and a livelihood. The coloni, who were attached to the soil, were much the same as the mediæval serfs. We have already noticed them coming into being, apparently when the Roman emperors settled barbarian prisoners to cultivate the desert lands of Italy; and before the barbarian invasions their numbers seem to have much increased. M. Guizot has devoted two chapters to this subject. (*Hist. de la Civilisation en France*, vii., viii.)

² See Finlay's *Hist. of Greece*, vol. i. p. 241.

³ Moehler, p. 181.

⁴ "Non v'era anticamente signor secolare, vescovo, abbate, capitolo di canonici e monistero che non avesse al suo servizio molti servi. Molto frequentemente

century, however, slaves in Europe were very rare. In the fourteenth century slavery was almost unknown.*

Closely connected with the influence of the Church in destroying hereditary slavery, was its influence in redeeming captives from servitude. In no other form of charity was its beneficial character more continually and more splendidly displayed. During the long and dreary trials of the barbarian invasions, when the whole structure of society was dislocated, when vast districts and mighty cities were in a few months almost depopulated, and when the flower of the youth of Italy were mown down by the sword, or carried away into captivity, the bishops never desisted from their efforts to alleviate the sufferings of the prisoners. St. Ambrose, disregarding the outcries of the Arians, who denounced his act as atrocious sacrilege, sold the rich church ornaments of Milan to rescue some captives who had fallen into the hands of the Goths, and this practice—which was afterwards formally sanctioned by St. Gregory the Great—became speedily general. When the Roman army had captured, but refused to support, seven thousand Persian prisoners, Acacius, Bishop of Amida, undeterred by the bitter hostility of the Persians to Christianity, and declaring that "God had no need of plates or dishes," sold all the rich church ornaments of his diocese, rescued the unbelieving prisoners, and sent them back unharmed to their king. During the horrors of the Vandal invasion, Deogratias, Bishop of Carthage, took a similar step to ransom the Roman prisoners. St. Augustine, St. Gregory the Great, St. Cæsarius of Arles, St. Exuperius of Toulouse, St. Hilary, St. Remi, all melted down or sold their church vases to free prisoners. St. Cyprian sent a large sum for the same purpose to the Bishop of Nicomedia. St. Epiphanius and St. Avitus, in conjunction with a rich Gaulish lady named Syagria, are said to have rescued thousands. St. Eligius devoted to this object his entire

fortune. St. Paulinus of Nola displayed a similar generosity, and the legends even assert, though untruly, that he, like St. Peter Teleonarius and St. Serapion, having exhausted all other forms of charity, as a last gift sold himself to slavery. When, long afterwards, the Mohammedan conquests in a measure reproduced the calamities of the barbarian invasions, the same unwearied charity was displayed. The Trinitarian monks, founded by John of Matha in the twelfth century, were devoted to the release of Christian captives, and another society was founded with the same object by Peter Nolasco, in the following century.[†]

The different branches of the subject I am examining are so closely intertwined that it is difficult to investigate one without in a measure anticipating the others. While discussing the influence of the Church in protecting infancy, in raising the estimate of human life, and in alleviating slavery, I have trenchd largely upon the last application of the doctrine of Christian fraternity I must examine—I mean the foundation of charity. The difference between pagan and Christian societies in this matter is very profound; but a great part of it must be ascribed to causes other than religious opinions. Charity finds an extended scope for action only where there exists a large class of men at once independent and impoverished. In the ancient societies, slavery in a great measure replaced pauperism, and, by securing the subsistence of a very large proportion of the poor, contracted the sphere of charity. And what slavery did at Rome for the very poor, the system of clientage did for those of a somewhat higher rank. The existence of these two institutions is sufficient to show the injustice of judging the two societies by a mere comparison of their charitable institutions, and we must also remember that among the ancients the relief of the indigent was one of the most important functions of the State. Not to dwell upon the many measures taken with this object in ancient Greece, in considering the condition of the Roman poor we are at once met by the simple fact that for several centuries the immense majority of these were habitually supported by

solevano i secolari manometterli. Non così le chiese, e i monisteri, non per altra cagione, a mio credere, se non perchè la manumissione è una specie di alienazione, ed era dai canonisti proibito d'alienare i beni delle chiese." (Muratori, *Dissert.* xv.) Some Councils, however, recognised the right of bishops to emancipate Church slaves. (Moehler, *Le Christianisme et l'Esclavage*, p. 187.) Many peasants placed themselves under the dominion of the monks, as being the best masters, and also to obtain the benefit of their prayers.

* Muratori, *Halham's Middle Ages*, ch. ii. part ii.

† See on this subject Ryan, pp. 151-152; Cibrario, *Economica politica del Medio Evo*, lib. iii. cap. ii, and especially Le Blant, *Inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule*, tome ii. pp. 284-299.

gratuitous distributions of corn. In a very early period of Roman history we find occasional instances of distribution; but it was not till A.U.C. 630 that Caius Gracchus caused a law to be made, supplying the poorer classes with corn at a price that was little more than nominal; and although, two years after, the nobles succeeded in revoking this law, it was after several fluctuations finally re-enacted in A.U.C. 679. The Cassia-Terentia law, as it was called from the consuls under whom it was at last established, was largely extended in its operation, or, as some think, revived from neglect, in A.U.C. 691, by Cato of Utica, who desired by this means to divert popularity from the cause of Cæsar, under whom multitudes of the poor were enrolling themselves. Four years later, Clodius Pulcher, abolishing the small payment which had been demanded, made the distribution entirely gratuitous. It took place once a month, and consisted of five modii¹ a head. In the time of Julius Cæsar no less than 320,000 persons were inscribed as recipients; but Cæsar reduced the number by one-half. Under Augustus it had risen to 200,000. This emperor desired to restrict the distribution of corn to three or four times a year, but, yielding to the popular wish, he at last consented that it should continue monthly. It soon became the leading fact of Roman life. Numerous officers were appointed to provide it. A severe legislation controlled their acts, and to secure a regular and abundant supply of corn for the capital became the principal object of the provincial governors. Under the Antonines the number of the recipients had considerably increased, having sometimes, it is said, exceeded 500,000. Septimus Severus added to the corn a ration of oil. Aurelian replaced the monthly distribution of unground corn by a daily distribution of bread, and added, moreover, a portion of pork. Gratuitous distributions were afterwards extended to Constantinople, Alexandria, and Antioch, and were probably not altogether unknown in smaller towns.²

¹ About five-sixths of a bushel. See Hume's *Essay on the Populousness of Ancient Nations*.

² The history of these distributions is traced with admirable learning by M. Naudet in his *Mémoires sur les Secours publics dans l'Antiquité* (*Mém. de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres*, tome xiii.), an essay to which I am much indebted. See, too, Monnier, *Hist. de l'Assistance publique*; B. Dumas, *Des Secours publics chez les Anciens*; and Schmidt, *Essai sur la*

We have already seen that this gratuitous distribution of corn ranked, with the institution of slavery and the gladiatorial exhibitions, as one of the chief demoralising influences of the Empire. The most injudicious charity, however pernicious to the classes it is intended to relieve, has commonly a beneficial and softening influence upon the donor, and through him upon society at large. But the Roman distribution of corn, being merely a political device, had no humanising influence upon the people, while, being regulated only by the indigence, and not at all by the infirmities or character, of the recipient, it was a direct and overwhelming encouragement to idleness. With a provision of the necessities of life, and with an abundant supply of amusements, the poor Romans readily gave up honourable labour, all trades in the city languished, every interruption in the distribution of corn was followed by fearful sufferings, free gifts of land were often insufficient to attract the citizens to honest labour, and the multiplication of children, which rendered the public relief inadequate, was checked by abortion, exposition, or infanticide.

When we remember that the population of Rome probably never exceeded a million and a half, that a large proportion of the indigent were provided for as slaves, and that more than 200,000 freemen were habitually supplied with the first necessary of life, we cannot, I think, charge the pagan society of the metropolis, at least, with an excessive parsimony in relieving poverty. But besides the distribution of corn, several other measures were taken. Salt, which was very largely used by the Roman poor, had during the Republic been made a monopoly of the State, and was sold by it at a price that was little more than nominal.³ The distribution of land, which was the subject of the agrarian laws, was, under a new form, practised by Julius Cæsar,⁴ Nerva,⁵ and Septimus Severus,⁶ who bought land to divide it among the poor citizens. Large legacies were left to the people by Julius Cæsar, Augustus, and others, and considerable, though irregular, donations were made on occasions of great rejoicings.

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³ Livy, ii. 9; Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* xxxi. 41.

⁴ Dion Cassius, xxxviii. 1-7.

⁵ Xiphilin, lxxviii. 2; Pliny, *Ep.* vii. 31.

⁶ Spartian. *Sept. Severus*.

Numerous public baths were established, to which, when they were not absolutely gratuitous, the smallest coin in use gave admission, and which were in consequence habitually employed by the poor. Vespasian instituted, and the Antonines extended, a system of popular education, and the movement I have already noticed, for the support of the children of poor parents, acquired very considerable proportions. The first trace of it at Rome may be found under Augustus, who gave money and corn for the support of young children, who had previously not been included in the public distributions.¹ This appears, however, to have been but an act of isolated benevolence, and the honour of first instituting a systematic effort in this direction belongs to Nerva, who enjoined the support of poor children, not only in Rome, but in all the cities of Italy.² Trajan greatly extended the system. In his reign 5,000 poor children were supported by the Government in Rome alone,³ and similar measures, though we know not on what scale, were taken in the other Italian and even African cities.⁴ At the little town of Velleia we find a charity instituted by Trajan, for the partial support of 270 children.⁵ Private benevolence followed in the same direction, and several inscriptions which still remain, though they do not enable us to write its history, sufficiently attest its activity. The younger Pliny, besides warmly encouraging schools, devoted a small property to the support of poor children in his native city of Como.⁶ The name of Cælia Macrina is preserved as the foundress of a charity for 100 children at Terracina.⁷ Hadrian increased the supplies of corn allotted to these charities, and he was also distinguished for his bounty to poor women.⁸ Antoninus was accustomed to lend money to the poor at four per cent, which was much below the normal rate of interest,⁹ and both he and Marcus Aurelius dedicated to the memory of

their wives institutions for the support of girls.¹ Alexander Severus in like manner dedicated an institution for the support of children to the memory of his mother.² Public hospitals were probably unknown in Europe before Christianity; but there are traces of the distribution of medicine to the sick poor,³ there were private infirmaries for slaves, and also, it is believed, military hospitals.⁴ Provincial towns were occasionally assisted by the Government in seasons of great distress, and there are some recorded instances of private legacies for their benefit.⁵

These various measures are by no means inconsiderable, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that many similar steps were taken, of which all record has been lost. The history of charity presents so few salient features, so little that can strike the imagination or arrest the attention, that it is usually almost wholly neglected by historians; and it is easy to conceive what inadequate notions of our existing charities could be gleaned from the casual allusions in plays or poems, in political histories or court memoirs. There can, however, be no question that neither in practice nor in theory, neither in the institutions that were founded nor in the place that was assigned to it in the scale of duties, did charity in antiquity occupy a position at all comparable to that which it has obtained by Christianity. Nearly all relief was a State measure, dictated much more by policy than by benevolence; and the habit of selling young children, the innumerable expositions, the readiness of the poor to enrol themselves as gladiators, and the frequent famines, show how large was the measure of unrelieved distress. A very few pagan examples of charity have, indeed, descended to us. Among the Greeks we find Epaminondas ransoming captives, and collecting dowers for poor girls,⁶ Cimon, feeding the hungry and clothing the naked;⁷ Bias, purchasing, emancipating, and furnishing with dowers

¹ Suet. *August* 41, Dion Cassius. li. 1.

² "Afflictos civitatis relevavit, puellas puerosque natos parentibus egestosis sumptu publico per Italiam oppida ali jussit." (Sext. Aurelius Victor, *Epitome*, "Nerva.") This measure of Nerva, though not mentioned by any other writer, is confirmed by the evidence of medals. (Naudet, p. 75.)

³ Plin. *Panegy.* xxvi. xxviii

⁴ We know of this charity from an extant bronze tablet. See Schmidt, *Essai historique sur la Société romaine*, p. 428.

⁵ Plin. *Ep.* i. 8, iv. 13

⁶ Spartianus, *Hadrian*

⁷ Capitolinus, *Antoninus*

⁸ Schmidt, p. 429

¹ Capitolinus, *Anton*, *Marc Aurel.*

² Lampridius, *A Severus*

³ See Friedländer, *Hist. des Mœurs romaines*, iii. p. 137

⁴ Seneca (*De Ira*, lib. i. cap. 16) speaks of institutions called *valetudinaria*, which most writers think were private infirmaries in rich men's houses. The opinion that the Romans had public hospitals is maintained in a very learned and valuable, but little-known work, called *Collections relative to the Systematic Relief of the Poor* (London, 1815)

⁵ See Tacit. *Annal.* xii. 38; Pliny, v. 7; x. 79.

⁶ Cornelius Nepos, *Epaminondas*, cap. iii.

⁷ Plutarch, *Cimon*.

some captive girls of Messina.² Tacitus has described with enthusiasm how, after a catastrophe near Rome, the rich threw open their houses and taxed all their resources to relieve the sufferers.³ There existed, too, among the poor, both of Greece and Rome, mutual insurance societies, which undertook to provide for their sick and infirm members.⁴ The very frequent reference to mendicancy in the Latin writers shows that beggars, and therefore those who relieved beggars, were numerous. The duty of hospitality was also strongly enjoined, and was placed under the special protection of the supreme Deity. But the active, habitual, and detailed charity of private persons, which is so conspicuous a feature in all Christian societies, was scarcely known in antiquity, and there are not more than two or three moralists who have even noticed it. Of these, the chief rank belongs to Cicero, who devoted two very judicious but somewhat cold chapters to the subject. Nothing, he said, is more suitable to the nature of man than beneficence or liberality, but there are many cautions to be urged in practising it. We must take care that our bounty is a real blessing to the person we relieve; that it does not exceed our own means; that it is not, as was the case with Sylla and Cæsar, derived from the spoliation of others; that it springs from the heart and not from ostentation; that the claims of gratitude are preferred to the mere impulses of compassion, and that due regard is paid both to the character and to the wants of the recipient.⁴

Christianity for the first time made charity a rudimentary virtue, giving it a leading place in the moral type, and in the exhortations of its teachers. Besides its general influence in stimulating the affections, it effected a complete revolution in this sphere, by regarding the poor as the special representatives of the Christian Founder, and thus making the love of Christ, rather than the love of man, the principle of charity. Even in the days of persecution, collections for the relief of the poor were made at the Sunday meetings. The agapæ or feasts of love were intended mainly for the poor, and food that was saved by the fasts was devoted to their benefit. A vast organisa-

tion of charity, presided over by the bishops, and actively directed by the deacons, soon ramified over Christendom, till the bond of charity became the bond of unity, and the most distant sections of the Christian Church corresponded by the interchange of mercy. Long before the era of Constantine, it was observed that the charities of the Christians were so extensive—it may, perhaps, be said so excessive—that they drew very many impostors to the Church;⁵ and when the victory of Christianity was achieved, the enthusiasm for charity displayed itself in the erection of numerous institutions that were altogether unknown to the pagan world. A Roman lady, named Fabiola, in the fourth century, founded at Rome, as an act of penance, the first public hospital, and the charity planted by that woman's hand overspread the world, and will alleviate, to the end of time, the darkest anguish of humanity. Another hospital was soon after founded by St. Pammachus; another of great celebrity by St. Basil, at Cæsarea. St. Basil also erected at Cæsarea what was probably the first asylum for lepers. Xenodochia, or refuges for strangers, speedily rose, especially along the paths of the pilgrims. St. Pammachus founded one at Ostia; Paula and Melania founded others at Jerusalem. The Council of Nice ordered that one should be erected in every city. In the time of St. Chrysostom the church of Antioch supported 3,000 widows and virgins, besides strangers and sick. Legacies for the poor became common; and it was not infrequent for men and women who desired to live a life of peculiar sanctity, and especially for priests who attained the episcopate, to bestow their entire properties in charity. Even the early Oriental monks, who for the most part were extremely removed from the active and social virtues, supplied many noble examples of charity. St. Ephrem, in a time of pestilence, emerged from his solitude to found and superintend a hospital at Edessa. A monk named Thalassius collected blind beggars

² Lucian describes this in his famous picture of Peregrinus; and Julian, much later, accused the Christians of drawing men into the Church by their charities. Socrates (*Hist. Eccl.* vii. 17) tells a story of a Jew who, pretending to be a convert to Christianity, had been often baptised in different sects, and had amassed a considerable fortune by the gifts he received on those occasions. He was at last miraculously detected by the Novatian bishop Paul. There are several instances in the *Lives of the Saints* of judgments falling on those who duped benevolent Christians.

³ Diog. Laërt. *Bios*.

⁴ Tac. *Annal.* iv. 63.

⁵ See Pliny, *Ep.* x. 94, and the remarks of Naudet, pp. 38, 39.

⁴ *De Offic.* i. 14, 15.

in an asylum on the banks of the Euphrates. A merchant named Apollonius founded on Mount Nitria a gratuitous dispensary for the monks. The monks often assisted by their labours provinces that were suffering from pestilence or famine. We may trace the remains of the pure socialism that marked the first phase of the Christian community, in the emphatic language with which some of the Fathers proclaimed charity to be a matter not of mercy but of justice, maintaining that all property is based on usurpation, that the earth by right is common to all men, and that no man can claim a superabundant supply of its goods except as an administrator for others. A Christian, it was maintained, should devote at least one-tenth of his profits to the poor.¹

The enthusiasm of charity, thus manifested in the Church, speedily attracted the attention of the pagans. The ridicule of Lucian, and the vain efforts of Julian to produce a rival system of charity within the limits of paganism,² emphatically attested both its pre-eminence and its catholicity. During the pestilences that desolated Carthage in A.D. 326, and Alexandria in the reigns of Gallienus and of Maximian, while the pagans fled panic-stricken from the contagion, the Christians extorted the admiration of their fellow-countrymen by the courage with which they rallied around their bishops, consoled the last hours of the sufferers, and buried the abandoned dead.³ In the rapid increase of pauperism arising from the emancipation of numerous slaves, their charity found free scope for action, and its resources were soon taxed to the utmost by the horrors of the barbarian invasions. The conquest of Africa by Genseric deprived Italy of the supply of corn upon

which it almost wholly depended, arrested the gratuitous distribution by which the Roman poor were mainly supported, and produced all over the land the most appalling calamities.⁴ The history of Italy became one monotonous tale of famine and pestilence, of starving populations and ruined cities. But everywhere amid this chaos of dissolution we may detect the majestic form of the Christian priest mediating between the hostile forces, straining every nerve to lighten the calamities around him. When the Imperial city was captured and plundered by the hosts of Alaric, a Christian church remained a secure sanctuary, which neither the passions nor the avarice of the Goths transgressed. When a fiercer than Alaric had marked out Rome for his prey, the Pope St. Leo, arrayed in his sacerdotal robes, confronted the victorious Hun, as the ambassador of his fellow-countrymen, and Attila, overpowered by religious awe, turned aside in his course. When, two years later, Rome lay at the mercy of Genseric, the same Pope interposed with the Vandal conqueror, and obtained from him a partial cessation of the massacre. The Archdeacon Pelagius interceded with similar humanity and similar success when Rome had been captured by Totila. In Gaul, Troyes is said to have been saved from destruction by the influence of St. Lupus, and Orleans by the influence of St. Agnan. In Britain an invasion of the Picts was averted by St. Germain of Auxerre. The relations of rulers to their subjects, and of tribunals to the poor, were modified by the same intervention. When Antioch was threatened with destruction on account of its rebellion against Theodosius, the anchorites poured forth from the neighbouring deserts to intercede with the ministers of the emperor, while the Archbishop Flavian went himself as a suppliant to Constantinople. St. Ambrose imposed public penance on Theodosius, on account of the massacre of Thessalonica. Synesius excommunicated for his oppressions a governor named Andronicus; and two French Councils, in the sixth century,

¹ See on this subject Chastel, *Études historiques sur la Charité* (Paris, 1853); Martin Doisy, *Hist. de la Charité pendant les quatre premiers siècles* (Paris, 1848); Champagny, *Charité chrétienne*; Tollemer, *Origines de la Charité catholique* (Paris, 1863); Ryan, *History of the Effects of Religion upon Mankind* (Dublin, 1820); and the works of Bingham and of Cave. I am also indebted, in this part of my subject, to Dean Milman's histories, Neander's *Ecclesiastical History and Private Life of the Early Christians*, and to Migné's *Encyclopédie*.

² See the famous epistle of Julian to Arsacius, where he declares that it is shameful that "the Galileans" should support not only their own, but also the heathen poor; and also the comments of Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* v. 16.

³ The conduct of the Christians, on the first of these occasions, is described by Pontius, *Vit. Cypriani*, ix. 19. St. Cyprian organised their efforts. On the Alexandrian famines and pestilences, see Eusebius, *H. E.* vii. 22, ix. 8.

⁴ The effects of this conquest have been well described by Sismondi, *Hist. de la Chute de l'Empire romain*, tome i. pp. 258-260. Theodoric afterwards made some efforts to re-establish the distribution, but it never regained its former proportions. The pictures of the starvation and depopulation of Italy at this time are appalling. Some fearful facts on the subject are collected by Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, ch. xxxvi.; Chateaubriand, 6me *Disc.* seconde partie.

imposed the same penalty on all great men who arbitrarily ejected the poor. Special laws were found necessary to restrain the turbulent charity of some priests and monks, who impeded the course of justice, and even snatched criminals from the hands of the law.¹ St. Abraham, St. Epiphanius, and St. Basil are all said to have obtained the remission or reduction of oppressive imposts. To provide for the interests of widows and orphans was part of the official ecclesiastical duty, and a Council of Macon anathematised any ruler who brought them to trial without first apprising the bishop of the diocese. A Council of Toledo, in the fifth century, threatened with excommunication all who robbed priests, monks, or poor men, or refused to listen to their expostulations. One of the chief causes of the inordinate power acquired by the clergy was their mediatorial office, and their gigantic wealth was in a great degree due to the legacies of those who regarded them as the trustees of the poor. As time rolled on, charity assumed many forms, and every monastery became a centre from which it radiated. By the monks the nobles were overawed, the poor protected, the sick tended, travellers sheltered, prisoners ransomed, the remotest spheres of suffering explored. During the darkest period of the Middle Ages monks founded a refuge for pilgrims amid the horrors of the Alpine snows. A solitary hermit often planted himself, with his little boat, by a bridgeless stream, and the charity of his life was to ferry over the traveller.² When the hideous disease of leprosy extended its ravages over Europe, when the minds of men were filled with terror, not only by its loathsomeness and its contagion, but also by the notion that it was in a peculiar sense supernatural,³ new hospitals and refuges overspread Europe, and monks

flocked in multitudes to serve in them.⁴ Sometimes, the legends say, the leper's form was in a moment transfigured, and he who came to tend the most loathsome of mankind received his reward, for he found himself in the presence of his Lord.

There is no fact of which an historian becomes more speedily or more painfully conscious than the great difference between the importance and the dramatic interest of the subjects he treats. Wars or massacres, the horrors of martyrdom or the splendours of individual prowess, are susceptible of such brilliant colouring, that with but little literary skill they can be so portrayed that their importance is adequately realised, and they appeal powerfully to the emotions of the reader. But this vast and unostentatious movement of charity, operating in the village hamlet and in the lonely hospital, staunching the widow's tears, and following all the windings of the poor man's griefs, presents few features the imagination can grasp, and leaves no deep impression upon the mind. The greatest things are often those which are most imperfectly realised; and surely no achievements of the Christian Church are more truly great than those which it has effected in the sphere of charity. For the first time in the history of mankind, it has inspired many thousands of men and women, at the sacrifice of all worldly interests, and often under circumstances of extreme discomfort or danger, to devote their entire lives to the single object of assuaging the sufferings of humanity. It has covered the globe with countless institutions of mercy, absolutely unknown to the whole pagan world. It has indissolubly united, in the minds of men, the idea of supreme goodness with that of active and constant benevolence. It has placed in every parish a religious minister, who, whatever may be his other functions, has at least been officially charged with the superintendence of an organisation of charity, and who finds in this office one of the most important as well as one of the most legitimate sources of his power.

There are, however, two important qualifications to the admiration with which we regard the history of Christian charity—one relating to a particular form of suffering, and the other of a more

¹ *Cod. Theod.* iv. x^o 15-16. The first of these laws was made by Theodosius, A.D. 392, the second by Honorius, A.D. 398.

² Cibrario, *Economica politica del Medio Evo*, lib. ii. cap. iii. The most remarkable of these saints was St. Julien l'Hospitalier, who, having under a mistake killed his father and mother, as a penance became a ferryman of a great river, and having embarked on a very stormy and dangerous night at the voice of a traveller in distress, received Christ into his boat. His story is painted on a window of the thirteenth century, in Rouen Cathedral. See Langlois, *Essai historique sur la Peinture sur verre*, pp. 32-37.

³ The fact of leprosy being taken as the image of sin gave rise to some curious notions of its supernatural character, and to many legends of saints curing leprosy by baptism. See Maury, *Légendes pieuses du Moyen-Age*, pp. 64-65.

⁴ See on these hospitals Cibrario, *Econ. Politica del Medio Evo*, lib. ii. cap. ii.

general kind. A strong, ill-defined notion of the supernatural character of insanity had existed from the earliest times; but there were special circumstances which rendered the action of the Church peculiarly unfavourable to those who were either predisposed to or afflicted with this calamity. The reality both of witchcraft and diabolical possession had been distinctly recognised in the Jewish writings. The received opinions about eternal torture, and ever-present dæmons, and the continued strain upon the imagination in dwelling upon an unseen world, were pre-eminently fitted to produce madness in those who were at all predisposed to it, and, where insanity had actually appeared, to determine the form and complexion of the hallucinations of the maniac.¹ Theology supplying all the images that acted most powerfully upon the imagination, most madness, for many centuries, took a theological cast. One important department of it appears chiefly in the lives of the saints. Men of lively imaginations and absolute ignorance, living apart from all their fellows, amid the horrors of a savage wilderness, practising austerities by which their physical system was thoroughly deranged, and firmly persuaded that innumerable devils were continually hovering about their cells and interfering with their devotions, speedily and very naturally became subject to constant hallucinations, which probably form the nucleus of truth in the legends of their lives. But it was impossible that insanity should confine itself to the orthodox forms of celestial visions, or of the apparitions and the defeats of devils. Very frequently it led the unhappy maniac to some delusion which called down upon him the speedy sentence of the Church. Thus, in the year 1300, the corpse of a Bohemian, or, according to another version, an English girl who imagined herself to be the Holy Ghost incarnate for the redemption of women, was dug up and burnt, and two women who believed in her perished at the stake.²

¹ Calmeil observes: "On a souvent constaté depuis un demi-siècle que la folie est sujette à prendre la teinte des croyances religieuses, des idées philosophiques ou superstitieuses, des préjugés sociaux qui ont cours, qui sont actuellement en vogue parmi les peuples ou les nations; que cette teinte varie dans un même pays suivant le caractère des événements relatifs à la politique extérieure, le caractère des événements civils, la nature des productions littéraires, des représentations théâtrales, suivant la tournure, la direction, le genre d'élan qu'y prennent l'industrie, les arts et les sciences" (*De la Folie*, tome 1. pp. 122-123.)

² Milman's *History of Latin Christianity*, vol. vu.

In the year 1359, a Spaniard declared himself to be the brother of the archangel Michael, and to be destined for the place in heaven which Satan had lost; and he added that he was accustomed every day both to mount into heaven and descend into hell, that the end of the world was at hand, and that it was reserved for him to enter into single combat with Antichrist. The poor lunatic fell into the hands of the Archbishop of Toledo, and was burnt alive.³ In some cases the hallucination took the form of an irregular inspiration. On this charge, Joan of Arc, and another girl who had been fired by her example, and had endeavoured, apparently under a genuine hallucination, to follow her career,⁴ were burnt alive. A famous Spanish physician and scholar, named Torralba, who lived in the sixteenth century, and who imagined that he had an attendant angel continually about him, escaped with public penance and confession;⁵ but a professor of theology in Lima, who laboured under the same delusion, and added to it some wild notions about his spiritual dignities, was less fortunate. He was burnt by the Inquisition of Peru.⁶ Most commonly, however, the theological notions about witchcraft either produced madness or determined its form, and, through the influence of the clergy of the different sections of the Christian Church, many thousands of unhappy women, who, from their age, their loneliness, and their infirmity, were most deserving of pity, were devoted to the hatred of mankind, and, having been tortured with horrible and ingenious cruelty, were at last burnt alive.

The existence, however, of some forms

PP 353, 354. "Venit de Anglia virgo decora valde, pariterque facunda, dicens, Spiritum Sanctum incarnatum in redemptionem mulierum, et baptizavit mulieres in nomine Patris. Fili et sui. Quæ mortua ducta fuit in Mediolanum, ibi et cremata" (*Annales Dominicorum Colmariensum*, in the "*Rerum Germanic. Scriptores*").

¹ "Martin González, du diocèse de Cuenca, disoit qu'il étoit frère de l'archange S. Michel, la première vérité et l'échelle du ciel, que c'étoit pour lui que Dieu réservoir la place que Lucifer avoit perdue, que tous les jours il s'élevait au plus haut de l'Empirée et descendait ensuite au plus profond des enfers, qu'à la fin du monde, qui étoit proche, il irait au devant de l'Antichrist et qu'il le terrasserait, ayant à sa main la croix de Jésus-Christ et sa couronne d'épines. L'archevêque de Tolède, n'ayant pu convertir ce fanatique obstiné, ni l'empêcher de dogmatiser, l'avoit enfin livré au bras séculier." (Touron, *Hist des Hommes illustres de l'Ordre de St Dominique*, Paris, 1745 [*Vie d'Eyméricus*] tome II. p. 635.)

² Calmeil, *De la Folie*, tome I. p. 134.

³ *Ibid.* tome I. pp. 242-247.

⁴ *Ibid.* tome I. p. 247.

of natural madness was generally admitted; but the measures for the relief of the unhappy victims were very few, and very ill-judged. Among the ancients, they were brought to the temples, and subjected to imposing ceremonies, which were believed supernaturally to relieve them, and which probably had a favourable influence through their action upon the imagination. The great Greek physicians had devoted considerable attention to this malady, and some of their precepts anticipated modern discoveries; but no lunatic asylum appears to have existed in antiquity.¹ In the first period of the hermit life, when many anchorites became insane through their penances, a refuge is said to have been opened for them at Jerusalem.² This appears, however, to have been for a long space of time a solitary instance, arising from the exigencies of a single class. The Mahomedans, in this charity, were early in the field. Benjamin of Tudela, who visited Bagdad in the twelfth century, describes a palace in that city, called "the House of Mercy," in which all mad persons found in the country were confined and bound with iron chains. They were carefully examined every month, and released as soon as they recovered.³ The asylum of Cairo is said to have been founded in A.D. 1304.⁴ Leo Africanus notices the existence of a similar institution at Fez, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, and mentions that the patients were restrained by chains,⁵ and it is probable that the care of the insane was a general form of charity in Mahomedan countries. Among the Christians establishments for the separate treatment of lunatics appear to have been very rare before the fifteenth century. In addition to the asylum at Jerusalem, a modern writer who has devoted much research to the subject has only discovered, before that date, four institutions of the kind in Christendom. One of them was at Constantinople, two were in Germany, and one was in England.⁶ The Knights of Malta were the one order who admitted lunatics into their hospitals. A monk named Juan Gilaberto Joffre, filled with compassion at the sight of the maniacs

who were hooted by crowds through the streets of Valencia, founded an asylum in that city, and his example was speedily followed in other Spanish cities. The new charity was introduced into Saragossa in A.D. 1425, into Seville and Valladolid in A.D. 1436, into Toledo in A.D. 1483.⁷ Two other very honourable facts may be mentioned, establishing the pre-eminence of Spanish charity in this field. The first is, that the oldest lunatic asylum in the metropolis of Catholicism was that erected by Spaniards, in A.D. 1548.⁸ The second is, that when, at the close of the last [eighteenth] century, Pinel began his great labours in this sphere, he pronounced Spain to be the country in which lunatics were treated with most wisdom and most humanity.⁹

In most countries their condition was indeed truly deplorable. While many thousands were burnt as witches, those who were recognised as insane were compelled to endure all the horrors of the harshest imprisonment. Blows, bleeding, and chains were their usual treatment, and horrible accounts were given of madmen who had spent decades bound in dark cells.⁴ Such treatment naturally aggravated their malady, and that malady in many cases rendered impossible the resignation and ultimate torpor which alleviate the sufferings of ordinary prisoners. Not until the eighteenth century was the condition of this unhappy class seriously improved. The combined progress of theological scepticism and scientific knowledge relegated witchcraft to the world of phantoms, and the exertions of Morgagni in Italy, of Cullen in Scotland, and of Pinel in France, renovated the whole treatment of acknowledged lunatics.

The second qualification to the admiration with which we regard the history of Christian charity arises from the undoubted fact that a large proportion of charitable institutions have directly increased the poverty they were intended to relieve. The question of the utility

¹ I have taken these facts from a very interesting little work, Desmaisons, *Des Asiles d'Aliénés en Espagne; Recherches historiques et médicales* (Paris, 1850). Dr. Desmaisons conjectures that the Spaniards took their asylums from the Mahomedans; but, as it seems to me, he altogether fails to prove his point. His work contains some curious information on the history of lunatic asylums, but several of his statements have been controverted by Mr. Burdett.

² Amydenus, *Pietas Romana* (Oxford, 1687), p. 21; Desmaisons, p. 103.

³ Pinel, *Traité médico-philosophique*, pp. 241, 242.

⁴ See the dreadful description in Pinel, pp. 200-202.

¹ See Esquirol, *Maladies mentales*.

² Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, ch. xxxvii.

³ Purchas's *Pilgrims*, ii. 145a.

⁴ Desmaisons' *Asiles d'Aliénés en Espagne*, p. 53.

⁵ Leo Africanus, *Description of Africa*, book iii.

⁶ See Mr. Henry Burdett's great work, *The Hospitals and Asylums of the World*, vol. i. pp. 38, 42.

and nature of charity is one which, since the modern discoveries of political economy, has elicited much discussion, and in many cases, I think, much exaggeration. What political economy has effected on the subject may be comprised under two heads. It has elucidated more clearly, and in greater detail than had before been done, the effect of provident self-interest in determining the welfare of societies, and it has established a broad distinction between productive and unproductive expenditure. It has shown that, where idleness is supported, idleness will become common; that, where systematic public provision is made for old age, the parsimony of foresight will be neglected; and that therefore these forms of charity, by encouraging habits of idleness and improvidence, ultimately increase the wretchedness they were intended to alleviate. It has also shown that, while unproductive expenditure, such as that which is devoted to amusements or luxury, is undoubtedly beneficial to those who provide it, the fruit perishes in the usage; while productive expenditure, such as the manufacture of machines, or the improvement of the soil, or the extension of commercial enterprise, gives a new impulse to the creation of wealth. It has proved that the first condition of the rapid accumulation of capital is the diversion of money from unproductive to productive channels, and that the amount of accumulated capital is one of the two regulating influences of the wages of the labourer. From these positions some persons have inferred that charity should be condemned as a form of unproductive expenditure. But, in the first place, all charities that foster habits of forethought and develop new capacities in the poorer classes, such as popular education, or the formation of savings banks, or insurance companies, or, in many cases, small and discriminating loans, or measures directed to the suppression of dissipation, are in the strictest sense productive; and the same may be said of many forms of employment, given in exceptional crises through charitable motives; and, in the next place, it is only necessary to remember that the happiness of mankind, to which the accumulation of wealth should only be regarded as a means, is the real object of charity, and it will appear that many forms which are not strictly productive, in the commercial sense, are in the

highest degree conducive to this end, and have no serious counteracting evil. In the alleviation of those sufferings that do not spring either from improvidence or from vice, the warmest as well as the most enlightened charity will find an ample sphere for its exertions.* Blindness, and other exceptional calamities, against the effects of which prudence does not and cannot provide, the miseries resulting from epidemics, from war, from famine, from the first sudden collapse of industry produced by new inventions or changes in the channels of commerce; hospitals, which, besides other advantages, are the greatest schools of medical science, and withdraw from the crowded alley multitudes who would otherwise form centres of contagion—these, and such as these, will long tax to the utmost the generosity of the wealthy; while, even in the spheres upon which the political economist looks with the most unfavourable eye, exceptional cases will justify exceptional assistance. The charity which is pernicious is commonly not the highest but the lowest kind. The rich man, prodigal of money, which is to him of little value, but altogether incapable of devoting any personal attention to the object of his alms, often injures society by his donations; but this is rarely the case with that far nobler charity which makes men familiar with the haunts of wretchedness, and follows the object of its care through all the phases of his life. The question of the utility of charity is merely a question of ultimate consequences. Political economy has, no doubt, laid down some general rules of great value on the subject; but yet the pages which Cicero devoted to it nearly two thousand years ago might have been written by the most enlightened modern economist; and it will be continually found that the Protestant lady, working in her parish, by the simple force of common sense and by a scrupulous and minute attention to the condition and character of those whom she relieves, is unconsciously illustrating with perfect accuracy the enlightened charity of Malthus.

But in order that charity should be

* Malthus, who is sometimes, though most unjustly, described as an enemy to all charity, has devoted an admirable chapter (*On Population*, book iv. ch. ix.) to the "direction of our charity", but the fullest examination of this subject with which I am acquainted is the very interesting work of Duchâtel, *Sur la Charité*.

useful, it is essential that the benefit of the sufferer should be a real object to the donor; and a very large proportion of the evils that have arisen from Catholic charity may be traced to the absence of this condition. The first substitution of devotion for philanthropy, as the motive of benevolence, gave so powerful a stimulus to the affections that it may on the whole be regarded as a benefit, though, by making compassion operate solely through a theological medium, it often produced among theologians a more than common indifference to the sufferings of all who were external to their religious community. But the new principle speedily degenerated into a belief in the expiatory nature of the gifts. A form of what may be termed selfish charity arose, which acquired at last gigantic proportions, and exercised a most pernicious influence upon Christendom. Men gave money to the poor, simply and exclusively for their own spiritual benefit, and the welfare of the sufferer was altogether foreign to their thoughts.¹

The evil which thus arose from some forms of Catholic charity may be traced from a very early period, but it only acquired its full magnitude after some centuries. The Roman system of gratuitous distribution was, in the eyes of the political economist, about the worst that could be conceived, and the charity of the Church being, in at least a measure, discriminating, was at first a very great, though even then not an unmingled, good. Labour was also not unfrequently enjoined as a duty by the Fathers, and at a later period the services of the Benedictine monks, in destroying by their example the stigma which slavery had attached to it, were very great. Still, one of the first consequences of the exuberant charity of the Church was to multiply impostors and mendicants, and the idleness of the monks was one of the earliest complaints. Valentinian made a severe law, condemning robust beggars to perpetual slavery. As the monastic system was increased, and especially after the mendicant orders had consecrated mendicancy, the evil assumed gigantic dimensions. Many thousands of strong

men, absolutely without private means, were in every country withdrawn from productive labour, and supported by charity. The notion of the meritorious nature of simple almsgiving immeasurably multiplied beggars. The stigma, which it is the highest interest of society to attach to mendicancy, it became a main object of theologians to remove. Saints wandered through the world begging money, that they might give to beggars, or depriving themselves of their garments, that they might clothe the naked; and the result of their teaching was speedily apparent. In all Catholic countries where ecclesiastical influences have been permitted to develop unmolested, the monastic organisations have proved a deadly canker, corroding the prosperity of the nation. Withdrawing multitudes from all production, encouraging a blind and pernicious almsgiving, diffusing habits of improvidence through the poorer classes, fostering an ignorant admiration for saintly poverty, and an equally ignorant antipathy to the habits and aims of an industrial civilisation, they have paralysed all energy, and proved an insuperable barrier to material progress. The poverty they have relieved has been insignificant compared with the poverty they have caused. In no case was the abolition of monasteries effected in a more indefensible manner than in England; but the transfer of property, that was once employed in a great measure in charity, to the courtiers of King Henry, was ultimately a benefit to the English poor; for no misapplication of this property by private persons could produce as much evil as an unrestrained monasticism. The value of Catholic services in alleviating pain and sickness, and the more exceptional forms of suffering, can never be overrated. The noble heroism of her servants, who have devoted themselves to charity, has never been surpassed, and the perfection of their organisation has, I think, never been equalled; but in the sphere of simple poverty it can hardly be doubted that the Catholic Church has created more misery than it has cured.

Still, even in this field we must not forget the benefits resulting, if not to the sufferer, at least to the donor. Charitable habits, even when formed in the first instance from selfish motives, even when so misdirected as to be positively injurious to the recipient, rarely fail to exercise a

¹ This is very tersely expressed by a great Protestant writer: "I give no alms to satisfy the hunger of my brother, but to fulfil and accomplish the will and command of my God." (Sir T. Browne *Religio Medici*, part II § 2.) A saying almost exactly similar is, if I remember right, ascribed to St. Elizabeth of Hungary.

softening and purifying influence on the character. All through the darkest period of the Middle Ages, amid ferocity and fanaticism and brutality, we may trace the subduing influence of Catholic charity, blending strangely with every excess of violence and every outburst of persecution. It would be difficult to conceive a more frightful picture of society than is presented by the history of Gregory of Tours; but that long series of atrocious crimes, narrated with an almost appalling tranquillity, is continually interspersed with accounts of kings, queens, or prelates, who, in the midst of the disorganised society, made the relief of the poor the main object of their lives. No period of history exhibits a larger amount of cruelty, licentiousness, and fanaticism than the Crusades; but side by side with the military enthusiasm, and with the almost universal corruption, there expanded a vast movement of charity, which covered Christendom with hospitals for the relief of leprosy, and which grappled nobly, though ineffectually, with the many forms of suffering that were generated. St. Peter Nolasco, whose great labours in ransoming captive Christians I have already noticed, was an active participator in the atrocious massacre of the Albigenses.¹ Of Shane O'Neale, one of the ablest, but also one of the most ferocious, Irish chieftains who ever defied the English power, it is related, amid a crowd of crimes, that, "sitting at meat, before he put one morsel into his mouth he used to slice a portion above the daily alms, and send it to some beggar at his gate, saying it was meet to serve Christ first."²

The great evils produced by the encouragement of mendicancy which has always accompanied the uncontrolled development of Catholicity, have naturally given rise to much discussion and legislation. The fierce denunciations of the mendicant orders by William of St. Amour in the thirteenth century were not on account of their encouragement of mischievous charity,³ but one of the disciples of Wycliffe, named Nicholas of Hereford, was conspicuous for his opposi-

tion to indiscriminate gifts to beggars;⁴ and a few measures of an extended order appear to have been taken even before the Reformation.⁵ In England laws of the most savage cruelty were then passed, in hopes of eradicating mendicancy. A parliament of Henry VIII., before the suppression of the monasteries, issued a law providing a system of organised charity, and imposing on anyone who gave anything to a beggar a fine of ten times the value of his gift. A sturdy beggar was to be punished with whipping for the first offence, with whipping and the loss of the tip of his ear for the second, and with death for the third.⁶ Under Edward VI., an atrocious law, which, however, was repealed in the same reign, enacted that every sturdy beggar who refused to work should be branded, and adjudged for two years as a slave to the person who gave information against him; and if he took flight during his period of servitude, he was condemned for the first offence to perpetual slavery, and for the second to death. The master was authorised to put a ring of iron round the neck of his slave, to chain him, and to scourge him. Anyone might take the children of a sturdy beggar for apprentices, till the boys were twenty-four and the girls twenty.⁷ Another law, made under Elizabeth, punished with death any strong man over the age of eighteen who was convicted for the third time of begging; but the penalty in this reign was afterwards reduced to a life-long service in the galleys, or to banishment, with a penalty of death to the returned convict.⁸ Under the same queen the poor-law system was elaborated, and Malthus long afterwards showed that its effects in discouraging parsimony rendered it scarcely less pernicious than the monastic system that had preceded it. In many Catholic countries, severe, though less atrocious, measures were taken to grapple with the evil of mendicancy. That shrewd and sagacious pontiff, Sixtus V., who, though not the greatest man, was by far the greatest statesman who has ever sat on the papal throne,

¹ Henry de Knyghton, *De Eventibus Angliae*.

² There was some severe legislation in England on the subject after the Black Death. (Eden's *History of the Labouring Classes*, vol. 1, p. 34.) In France, too, a royal ordinance of 1350 ordered men who had been convicted of begging three times to be branded with a hot iron. (Monteil, *Hist. des Français*, tome 1, p. 434.)

³ Eden, vol. 1, pp. 83-87.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 101-103.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 127-130.

¹ See Butler's *Lives of the Saints*.

² Campion's *Historie of Ireland*, book ii chap. x.

³ He wrote his *Perils of the Last Times* in the interest of the University of Paris, of which he was a Professor, and which was at war with the mendicant orders. See Milman's *Latin Christianity*, vol. vi, pp. 348-356, Fleury, *Eccl. Hist.* lxxxiv. 57.

made praiseworthy efforts to check it at Rome, where ecclesiastical influence had always made it peculiarly prevalent.¹ Charles V., in 1531, issued a severe enactment against beggars in the Netherlands, but excepted from its operation mendicant friars and pilgrims.² Under Louis XIV., equally severe measures were taken in France. But though the practical evil was fully felt, there was little philosophical investigation of its causes before the eighteenth century. Locke in England,³ and Berkeley in Ireland,⁴ briefly glanced at the subject; and in 1704 Defoe published a very remarkable tract, called *Giving Alms no Charity*, in which he noticed the extent to which mendicancy existed in England, though wages were higher than in any Continental country.⁵ A still more remarkable book, written by an author named Ricci, appeared at Modena in 1787, and excited considerable attention. The author pointed out with much force the gigantic development of mendicancy in Italy, traced it to the excessive charity of the people, and appears to have regarded as an evil all charity which sprang from religious motives and was greater than would spring from the unaided instincts of men.⁶ The freethinker Mandeville had long before assailed charity schools, and the whole system of endeavouring to elevate the poor,⁷ and Magdalen asylums and foundling hospitals have had fierce, though I believe much mistaken, adversaries.⁸ The reforms of the poor-laws,

and the writings of Malthus, gave a new impulse to discussion on the subject; but, with the qualifications I have stated, no new discoveries have, I conceive, thrown any just cloud upon the essential principle of Christian charity.

The last method by which Christianity has laboured to soften the characters of men has been by accustoming the imagination to expatiate continually upon images of tenderness and of pathos. Our imaginations, though less influential than our occupations, probably affect our moral characters more deeply than our judgments, and, in the case of the poorer classes especially, the cultivation of this part of our nature is of inestimable importance. Rooted, for the most part, during their entire lives to a single spot, excluded by their ignorance and their circumstances from most of the varieties of interest that animate the minds of other men, condemned to constant and plodding labour, and engrossed for ever with the minute cares of an immediate and an anxious present, their whole natures would have been hopelessly contracted were there no sphere in which their imaginations could expand. Religion is the one romance of the poor. It alone extends the narrow horizon of their thoughts, supplies the images of their dreams, allures them to the supersensual and the ideal. The graceful beings with which the creative fancy of paganism peopled the universe shed a poetic glow on the peasant's toil. Every stage of agriculture was presided over by a divinity, and the world grew bright by the companionship of the gods. But it is the peculiarity of the Christian types that, while they have fascinated the imagination, they have also purified the heart. The tender, winning, and almost feminine beauty of the Christian Founder, the Virgin mother, the agonies of Gethsemane or of Calvary, the many scenes of compassion and suffering that fill the sacred writings, are the pictures which for eighteen hundred years have governed the imaginations of the rudest and most ignorant of mankind. Associated with

¹ Morghini, *Istituzioni pieuse de Rome*.

² Eden, *History of the Labouring Classes*, i. 83.

³ Locke discussed the great increase of poverty, and a Bill was brought in suggesting some remedies, but did not pass. (Eden, vol. i. pp. 243-248.)

⁴ In a very forcible letter addressed to the Irish Catholic clergy.

⁵ This tract, which is extremely valuable for the light it throws upon the social condition of England at the time, was written in opposition to a Bill providing that the poor in the poor-houses should do wool, hemp, iron, and other works. Defoe says that wages in England were higher than anywhere on the Continent, though the amount of mendicancy was enormous. "The reason why so many pretend to want work is, that they can live so well with the pretence of wanting work... I affirm of my own knowledge, when I have wanted a man for labouring work, and offered nine shillings per week to strolling fellows at my door, they have frequently told me to my face they could get more a-begging."

⁶ *Riforma degli Istituti pii di Modena* (published first anonymously at Modena). It has been reprinted in the library of the Italian economists.

⁷ *Essay on Charity Schools*.

⁸ Magdalen asylums have been very vehemently assailed by M. Charles Comte, in his *Traité de Législation*. On the subject of Foundling Hospitals there is a whole literature. They were violently attacked by, I believe, Lord Brougham, in the *Edinburgh Review*, in

the early part of this [the nineteenth] century. Writers of this stamp, and indeed most political economists, greatly exaggerate the forethought of men and women, especially in matters where the passions are concerned. It may be questioned whether one woman in a hundred who plunges into a career of vice is in the smallest degree influenced by a consideration of whether or not charitable institutions are provided for the support of aged penitents.

the fondest recollections of childhood, with the music of the church bells, with the clustered lights and the tinsel splendour that seem to the peasant the very ideal of majesty; painted over the altar where he received the companion of his life, around the cemetery where so many whom he had loved were laid, on the stations of the mountain, on the portal of the vineyard, on the chapel where the storm-tossed mariner fulfils his grateful vow; keeping guard over his cottage door, and looking down upon his humble bed, forms of tender beauty and gentle pathos for ever haunt the poor man's fancy, and silently win their way into the very depths of his being. More than any spoken eloquence, more than any dogmatic teaching, they transform and subdue his character, till he learns to realise the sanctity of weakness and suffering, the supreme majesty of compassion and gentleness.

Imperfect and inadequate as is the sketch I have drawn, it will be sufficient to show how great and multiform have been the influences of Christian philanthropy. The shadows that rest upon the picture I have not concealed; but, when all due allowance has been made for them, enough will remain to claim our deepest admiration. The high conception that has been formed of the sanctity of human life, the protection of infancy, the elevation and final emancipation of the slave classes, the suppression of barbarous games, the creation of a vast and multifarious organisation of charity, and the education of the imagination by the Christian type, constitute together a movement of philanthropy which has never been paralleled or approached in the pagan world. The effects of this movement in promoting happiness have been very great. Its effect in determining character has probably been still greater. In that proportion or disposition of qualities which constitutes the ideal character, the gentler and more benevolent virtues have obtained, through Christianity, the foremost place. In the first and purest period they were especially supreme; but in the third century a great ascetic movement arose, which gradually brought a new type of character into the ascendant, and diverted the enthusiasm of the Church into new channels.

Tertullian, writing in the second century, contrasts, in a well-known passage,
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the Christians of his day with the gymnosophists or hermits of India, declaring that, unlike these, the Christians did not fly from the world, but mixed with pagans in the forum, in the market-places, in the public baths, in the ordinary business of life.* But, although the life of the hermit or the monk was unknown in the Church for more than two hundred years after its foundation, we may detect almost from the earliest time a tone of feeling which produces it. The central conceptions of the monastic system are the meritoriousness of complete abstinence from all sexual intercourse and of complete renunciation of the world. The first of these notions appeared in the very earliest period, in the respect attached to the condition of virginity, which was always regarded as sacred, and especially esteemed in the clergy, though for a long time it was not imposed as an obligation. The second was shown in the numerous efforts that were made to separate the Christian community as far as possible from the society in which it existed. Nothing could be more natural than that, when the increase and triumph of the Church had thrown the bulk of the Christians into active political or military labour, some should, as an exercise of piety, have endeavoured to imitate the separation from the world which was once the common condition of all. Besides this, a movement of asceticism had long been raging like a mental epidemic through the world. Among the Jews—whose law, from the great stress it laid upon marriage, the excellence of the rapid multiplication of population, and the hope of being the ancestor of the Messiah, was peculiarly repugnant to monastic conceptions—the Essenes had constituted a complete monastic society, abstaining from marriage and separating themselves wholly from the world. In Rome, whose practical genius was, if possible, even more opposed than that of the Jews to an inactive monasticism, and even among those philosophers who most represented its active and practical spirit, the same tendency was shown. The Cynics of the later Empire recommended a complete renunciation of domestic ties and a life spent mainly in the contemplation of wisdom. The Egyptian philosophy, that soon after acquired an ascendancy in Europe, anticipated still

* *Apol.* ch. xlii.

more closely the monastic ideal. On the outskirts of the Church, the many sects of Gnostics and Manicheans all held, under different forms, the essential evil of matter. The Docetæ, following the same notion, denied the reality of the body of Christ. The Montanists and the Novatians surpassed and stimulated the private penances of the orthodox.¹ The soil was thus thoroughly prepared for a great outburst of asceticism whenever the first seed was sown. This was done during the Decian persecution. Paul the hermit, who fled to the desert during that persecution, is said to have been the first of the tribe.² Antony, who speedily followed, greatly extended the movement, and in a few years the hermits had become a mighty nation. Persecution, which in the first instance drove great numbers as fugitives to the deserts, soon aroused a passionate religious enthusiasm that showed itself in an ardent desire for those sufferings which were believed to lead directly to heaven; and this enthusiasm, after the peace of Constantine, found its natural vent and sphere in the macerations of the desert life. The imaginations of men were fascinated by the poetic circumstances of that life which St. Jerome most eloquently embellished. Women were pre-eminent in recruiting for it. The same spirit that had formerly led the wife of the pagan official to entertain secret relations with the Christian priests, now led the wife of the Christian to become the active agent of the monks. While the father designed the son for the army or for some civil post, the mother was often straining every nerve to induce him to become a hermit. The monks secretly corresponded with her, they skillfully assumed the functions of education, in order that they might influence the young; and sometimes, to evade the precautions or the anger of the father, they concealed their profession and assumed the garb of lay pedagogues.³ The

pulpit, which had almost superseded and immeasurably transcended in influence the chairs of the rhetoricians, and which was filled by such men as Ambrose, Augustine, Chrysostom, Basil, and the Gregories, was continually exerted in the same cause, and the extreme luxury of the great cities produced a violent, but not unnatural, reaction of asceticism. The dignity of the monastic position, which sometimes brought men who had been simple peasants into connection with the emperors, the security it furnished to fugitive slaves and criminals, the desire of escaping from those fiscal burdens which, in the corrupt and oppressive administration of the Empire, had acquired an intolerable weight, and especially the barbarian invasions, which produced every variety of panic and wretchedness, conspired with the new religious teaching in peopling the desert. A theology of asceticism was speedily formed. The examples of Elijah and Elisha, to the first of whom, by a bold flight of imagination, some later Carmelites ascribed the origin of their order, and the more recent instance of the Baptist, were at once adduced. To an ordinary layman the life of an anchorite might appear in the highest degree opposed to that of the Teacher who began his mission at a marriage feast; who was continually reproached by his enemies for the readiness with which he mixed with the world, and who selected from the female sex some of his purest and most devoted followers; but the monkish theologians, avoiding for the most part these topics, dilated chiefly on his immaculate birth, his virgin mother, his life of celibacy, his exhortation to the rich young man. The fact that St. Peter, to whom a general primacy was already ascribed, was unquestionably married was a difficulty which was in a measure met by a tradition that both he and the other married apostles abstained from intercourse with their wives after their conversion.⁴ St. Paul, however, was probably unmarried, and his writings showed a decided preference for the unmarried state, which the ingenuity of theologians also discovered in some quarters where it might be least ex-

¹ On these penances, see Bingham, *Antiq.* book vii. Bingham, I think justly, divides the history of asceticism into three periods. During the first, which extends from the foundation of the Church to A.D. 250, there were men and women who, with a view to spiritual perfection, abstained from marriage, relinquished amusements, accustomed themselves to severe fasts, and gave up their property to works of charity; but did this in the middle of society and without leading the life of either a hermit or a monk. During the second period, which extended from the Decian persecution, anchorites were numerous, but the custom of a common or cenobitic life was unknown. It was originated in the time of Constantine by Pachomius.

² This is expressly stated by St. Jerome (*Vit. Pauli*).
³ See on this subject some curious evidence in

Neander's *Life of Chrysostom*. St. Chrysostom wrote a long work to console fathers whose sons were thus seduced to the desert.

⁴ On this tradition see Champagny, *Les Antonins*, tome i. p. 193.

pected. Thus, St. Jerome assures us that, when the clean animals entered the ark by sevens, and the unclean ones by pairs, the odd number typified the celibate and the even the married condition. Even of the unclean animals but one pair of each kind was admitted, lest they should perpetrate the enormity of second marriage.¹ Ecclesiastical tradition sustained the tendency, and St. James, as he has been portrayed by Hegesippus, became a kind of ideal saint, a faithful picture of what, according to the notions of theologians, was the true type of human nobility. He "was consecrated," it was said, "from his mother's womb. He drank neither wine nor fermented liquors, and abstained from animal food. A razor never came upon his head. He never anointed himself with oil, or used a bath. He alone was allowed to enter the sanctuary. He never wore woollen, but linen, garments. He was in the habit of entering the temple alone, and was often found upon his bended knees, and interceding for the forgiveness of the people, so that his knees became as hard as a camel's."²

The progress of the monastic movement, as has been truly said, "was not less rapid or universal than that of Christianity itself."³ Of the actual number of the anchorites, those who are acquainted with the extreme unveracity of the first historians of the movement will hesitate to speak with confidence. It is said that St. Pachomius, who, early in the fourth century, founded the cœnobitic mode of life, enlisted under his jurisdiction 7,000 monks;⁴ that in the days of St. Jerome nearly 50,000 monks were sometimes assembled at the Easter festivals;⁵ that in the desert of Nitria alone there were, in the fourth century, 5,000 monks under a single abbot;⁶ that an Egyptian city named Oxyrhynchus devoted itself almost exclusively to the ascetic life, and included 20,000 virgins and 10,000 monks;⁷ that St. Serapion presided over 10,000 monks;⁸ and that, towards the close of the fourth century, the monastic population in a great part of Egypt was nearly equal to the population of the cities.⁹ Egypt was

the parent of monachism, and it was there that it attained both its extreme development and its most austere severity; but there was very soon scarcely any Christian country in which a similar movement was not ardently propagated. St. Athanasius and St. Zeno are said to have introduced it into Italy,¹ where it soon afterwards received a great stimulus from St. Jerome. St. Hilarion instituted the first monks in Palestine, and he lived to see many thousands subject to his rule, and towards the close of his life to plant monachism in Cyprus. Eustathius, Bishop of Sebastia, spread it through Armenia, Paphlagonia, and Pontus. St. Basil laboured along the wild shores of the Euxine. St. Martin of Tours founded the first monastery in Gaul, and 2,000 monks attended his funeral. Unrecorded missionaries planted the new institution in the heart of Æthiopia, amid the little islands that stud the Mediterranean, in the secluded valleys of Wales and Ireland.² But even more wonderful than the many thousands who thus abandoned the world is the reverence with which they were regarded by those who, by their attainments or their character, would seem most opposed to the monastic ideal. No one had more reason than Augustine to know the danger of enforced celibacy, but St. Augustine exerted all his energies to spread monasticism through his diocese. St. Ambrose, who was by nature an acute statesman; St. Jerome and St. Basil, who were ambitious scholars; St. Chrysostom, who was pre-eminently formed to sway the refined throngs of a metropolis—all exerted their powers in favour of the life of solitude, and the last three practised it themselves. St. Arsenius, who was surpassed by no one in the extravagance of his penances, had held a high office at the court of the Emperor Arcadius. Pilgrims wandered among the deserts, collecting accounts of the miracles and the austerities of the saints, which filled Christendom with admiration; and

¹ There is a good deal of doubt and controversy about this. See a note in Mosheim's *Ecc. Hist.* (Soame's edition), vol. i. p. 354.

² Most of the passages remaining on the subject of the foundation of monachism are given by Thomassin, *Discipline de l'Eglise*, part. i. livre ii. ch. xii. This work contains also much general information about monachism. A curious collection of statistics of the numbers of the monks in different localities, additional to those I have given and gleaned from the *L. Sacre of the Saints*, may be found in Pitra (*Vie de St. Léger*), introd. p. lix.; 2,100, or, according to another account, 3,000 monks, lived in the monastery of Banchor.

¹ Ep. cxxiii.

² Euseb. *Ecc. Hist.* ii. 23.

³ Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, ch. xxxvii.; a brief but masterly sketch of the progress of the movement.

⁴ Palladius, *Hist. Laus* xxxviii.

⁵ Jerome, Preface to the Rule of St. Pachomius, § 7.

⁶ Cassian, *De Cœnob. Inst.* iv. 1.

⁷ Rufinus, *Hist. Monach.* ch. v. Rufinus visited it himself.

⁸ Palladius, *Hist. Laus* lxxvi.

⁹ Rufinus, *Hist. Mon.* vii.

the strange biographies which were thus formed, wild and grotesque as they are, enable us to realise very vividly the general features of the anchorite life which became the new ideal of the Christian world.¹

There is, perhaps, no phase in the moral history of mankind of a deeper or more painful interest than this ascetic epidemic. A hideous, sordid, and emaciated maniac, without knowledge, without patriotism, without natural affection, passing his life in a long routine of useless and atrocious self-torture, and quailing before the ghastly phantoms of his delirious brain, had become the ideal of the nations which had known the writings of Plato and Cicero and the lives of Socrates and Cato. For about two centuries, the hideous maceration of the body was regarded as the highest proof of excellence. St. Jerome declares, with a thrill of admiration, how he had seen a monk, who for thirty years had lived exclusively on a small portion of barley bread and of muddy water; another, who lived in a hole and never ate more than five figs for his daily repast;² a third, who cut his hair only on Easter Sunday, who never washed his clothes, who never changed his tunic till it fell to pieces, who starved himself till his eyes grew dim and his skin "like a pumice stone," and whose merits, shown by these austerities, Homer himself would be unable to recount.³ For six months, it is said, St. Macarius of Alexandria slept in a marsh, and exposed his body naked to the stings of venomous flies. He was accustomed to carry about with him eighty pounds of iron. His disciple, St. Eusebius, carried one hundred and fifty pounds of iron, and lived for three years in a dried-up well.

¹ The three principal are the *Historia Monachorum* of Rufinus, who visited Egypt A.D. 373, about seventeen years after the death of St. Antony, the *Institutiones* of Cassian, who, having visited the Eastern monks about A.D. 394, founded vast monasteries containing, it is said, 5,000 monks, at Marseilles, and died at a great age about A.D. 448; and the *Historia Lausiaca* (so called from Lausus, Governor of Cappadocia) of Palladius, who was himself a hermit on Mount Nitria, in A.D. 388. The first and last, as well as many minor works of the same period, are given in Rosweyde's invaluable collection of the lives of the Fathers, one of the most fascinating volumes in the whole range of literature.

The hospitality of the monks was not without drawbacks. In a church on Mount Nitria three whips were hung on a palm-tree—one for chastising monks, another for chastising thieves, and a third for chastising guests. (Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* vi.)

² *Vita Pauli*. St. Jerome adds, that some will not believe this, because they have no faith, but that all things are possible for those that believe.

³ *Vita St. Hilarii*.

St. Sabinus would only eat corn that had become rotten by remaining for a month in water. St. Besarion spent forty days and nights in the middle of thorn-bushes, and for forty years never lay down when he slept,⁴ which last penance was also during fifteen years practised by St. Pachomius.⁵ Some saints, like St. Marcellian, restricted themselves to one meal a day, so small that they continually suffered the pangs of hunger.⁶ Of one of them it is related that his daily food was six ounces of bread and a few herbs; that he was never seen to recline on a mat or bed, or even to place his limbs easily for sleep; but that sometimes, from excess of weariness, his eyes would close at his meals, and the food would drop from his mouth.⁷ Other saints, however, ate only every second day;⁸ while many, if we could believe the monkish historian, abstained for whole weeks from all nourishment.⁹ St. Macarius of Alexandria is said during an entire week to have never lain down, or eaten anything but a few uncooked herbs on Sunday.¹⁰ Of another famous saint, named John, it is asserted that for three whole years he stood in prayer, leaning upon a rock; that during all that time he never sat or lay down, and that his only nourishment was the sacrament, which was brought him on Sundays.¹¹ Some of the hermits lived in deserted dens of wild beasts, others in dried-up wells, while others found a congenial resting-place among the tombs.¹² Some disdained all clothes, and crawled abroad like the wild beasts, covered only by their matted hair. In Mesopotamia,

⁴ See a long list of these penances in Tillemont, *Mém. pour servir à l'Hist. Eccl.* tome viii.

⁵ *Vita Patrum* (Pachomius). He used to lean against a wall when overcome by drowsiness.

⁶ *Vita Patrum*, ix. 3.

⁷ *E.g.*, St. Antony, according to his biographer, St. Athanasius.

⁸ "Il y eut dans le désert de Scété des solitaires d'une éminente perfection.... On prétend que pour l'ordinaire ils passaient des semaines entières sans manger, mais apparemment cela ne se faisoit que dans des occasions particulières." (Tillemont, *Mém. pour servir à l'Hist. Eccl.* tome viii. p. 380.) Even this, however, was admirable!

⁹ Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* cap. xx.

¹⁰ "Primum cum accessisset ad eremum tribus continuis annis sub cuspudam saxi rupe stans, semper oravit, ita ut nunquam omnino resederit neque jacuerit. Somni autem tantum caperet, quantum stans capere potuit; cibum vero nunquam sumpserat nisi die Dominica. Presbyter enim tunc veniebat ad eum et offerebat pro eo sacrificium idque ei solum sacramentum erat et victus." (Rufinus, *Hist. Monach.* cap. xv.)

¹¹ Thus St. Antony used to live in a tomb, where he was beaten by the devil. (St. Athanasius, *Life of Antony*.)

and part of Syria, there existed a sect known by the name of "Grazers," who never lived under a roof, who ate neither flesh nor bread, but who spent their time for ever on the mountain side, and ate grass like cattle.¹ The cleanliness of the body was regarded as a pollution of the soul, and the saints who were most admired had become one hideous mass of clotted filth. St. Athanasius relates with enthusiasm how St. Antony, the patriarch of monachism, had never, to extreme old age, been guilty of washing his feet.² The less constant St. Poemen fell into this habit for the first time when a very old man, and, with a glimmering of common sense, defended himself against the astonished monks by saying that he had "learnt not to kill his body, but his passions."³ St. Abraham the hermit, however, who lived for fifty years after his conversion, rigidly refused from that date to wash either his face or his feet.⁴ He was, it is said, a person of singular beauty, and his biographer somewhat strangely remarks that "his face reflected the purity of his soul."⁵ St. Ammon had never seen himself naked.⁶ A famous virgin named Silvia, though she was sixty years old, and though bodily sickness was a consequence of her habits, resolutely refused, on religious principles, to wash any part of her body except her fingers.⁷ St. Euphrasia joined a convent of one hundred and thirty nuns, who never washed their feet, and who shuddered at the mention of a bath.⁸ An anchorite once imagined that he was mocked by an illusion of the devil, as

he saw gliding before him through the desert a naked creature black with filth and years of exposure, and with white hair floating to the wind. It was a once beautiful woman, St. Mary of Egypt, who had thus, during forty-seven years, been expiating her sins.⁹ The occasional decadence of the monks into habits of decency was a subject of much reproach. "Our fathers," said the abbot Alexander, looking mournfully back to the past, "never washed their faces, but we frequent the public baths."¹⁰ It was related of one monastery in the desert that the monks suffered greatly from want of water to drink; but at the prayer of the abbot Theodosius a copious stream was produced. Soon, however, some monks, tempted by the abundant supply, diverged from their old austerity, and persuaded the abbot to avail himself of the stream for the construction of a bath. The bath was made. Once, and once only, did the monks enjoy their ablutions, when the stream ceased to flow. Prayers, tears, and fastings were in vain. A whole year passed. At last the abbot destroyed the bath, which was the object of the Divine displeasure, and the waters flowed afresh.¹¹ But of all the evidences of the loathsome excesses to which this spirit was carried, the life of St. Simeon Stylites is probably the most remarkable. It would be difficult to conceive a more horrible or disgusting picture than is given of the penances by which that saint commenced his ascetic career. He had bound a rope around him so that it became imbedded in his flesh, which putrefied around it. "A horrible stench, intolerable to the bystanders, exhaled from his body, and worms dropped from him whenever he moved, and they filled his bed." Sometimes he left the monastery and slept in a

¹ Βορκοί. See on these monks Sozomen, vi 33; Evagrius, i 21. It is mentioned of a certain St. Marc of Athens that, having lived for thirty years naked in the desert, his body was covered with hair like that of a wild beast. (Bollandists, March 29.) St. Mary of Egypt, during part of her period of penance, lived upon grass. (*Vita Patrum*.)

² *Life of Antony*.

³ "Il ne faisoit pas aussi difficulté dans sa vieillesse de se laver quelquefois les pieds. Et comme on témoignait s'en étonner et trouver que cela ne répondait pas à la vie austère des anciens, il se justifiait par ces paroles : Nous avons appris à tuer, non pas notre corps mais nos passions" (Tillemont, *Mém. Hist. Eccl.* tom. xv. p. 143.) This saint was so very virtuous that he sometimes remained without eating for whole weeks.

⁴ "Non appropriavit oleum corpuseulo ejus. Facies vel etiam pedes a die conversionis suae nunquam diluti sunt." (*Vita Patrum*, c. xvii)

⁵ "In facie ejus puritas animi noscebatur." (*Ibid.* c. xviii.)

⁶ Socrates, iv. 23.

⁷ Heraclidis Paradisus (Rosweyde), c. xlii.

⁸ "Nulla earum pedes suos abluebat; aliquantæ vero audientes de balneo loqui, irridentes, confusionem et magnam abominationem se audire judicabant, quæ neque auditum suum hoc audire patiebantur." (*Vit. S. Euphras. c. vi.*) (Rosweyde.)

⁹ See her acts, Bollandists, April 2, and in the *Vita Patrum*.

¹⁰ "Patres nostri nunquam facies suas lavabant, nos autem lavacra publica balneaque frequentamus." (Moschus, *Pratum Spirituale*, clixvi.)

¹¹ *Pratum Spirituale*, lxxv.

An Irish saint, named Coemgenus, is said to have shown his devotion in a way which was directly opposite to that of the other saints I have mentioned—by his special use of cold water; but the principle in each case was the same—to mortify nature. St. Coemgenus was accustomed to pray for an hour every night in a pool of cold water, while the devil sent a horrible beast to swim round him. An angel, however, was sent to him for three purposes. "Tribus de causis a Domino missus est angelus ibi ad S. Coemgenum. Prima ut a diversis suis gravibus laboribus levius viveret paulisper; secunda ut horridam bestiam sancto infestam repelleret; tertia ut frigiditatem aquæ calefaceret." (Bollandists, June 3.) The editors say these acts are of doubtful authenticity.

dry well, inhabited, it is said, by dæmons. He built successively three pillars, the last being sixty feet high and scarcely two cubits in circumference; and on this pillar, during thirty years, he remained exposed to every change of climate, ceaselessly and rapidly bending his body in prayer almost to the level of his feet. A spectator attempted to number these rapid motions, but desisted from weariness when he had counted 1,244. For a whole year, we are told, St. Simeon stood upon one leg, the other being covered with hideous ulcers, while his biographer was commissioned to stand by his side, to pick up the worms that fell from his body and to replace them in the sores, the saint saying to the worm, "Eat what God has given you." From every quarter pilgrims of every degree thronged to do him homage. A crowd of prelates followed him to the grave. A brilliant star is said to have shone miraculously over his pillar, the general voice of mankind pronounced him to be the highest model of a Christian saint; and several other anchorites imitated or emulated his penances.¹

There is, if I mistake not, no department of literature the importance of which is more inadequately realised than the lives of the saints. Even where they have no direct historical value they have a moral value of the very highest order. They may not tell us with accuracy what men did at particular epochs; but they display with the utmost vividness what they thought and felt, their measure of probability, and their ideal of excellence. Decrees of councils, elaborate treatises of theologians, creeds, liturgies, and canons, are all but the husks of religious history. They reveal what was professed and argued before the world, but not that which was realised in the imagination or enshrined in the heart. The history of art, which in its ruder day reflected with delicate fidelity the fleeting images of an anthropomorphic age, is in this respect invaluable; but still more important is that vast Christian mythology which grew up spontaneously from the intellectual condition of the time, included all its dearest hopes, wishes, ideals, and imaginings, and constituted, during many centuries, the popular literature of Christendom. In the case of the

saints of the deserts, there can be no question that the picture—which is drawn chiefly by eye-witnesses—however grotesque may be some of its details, is in its leading features historically true. It is true that self-torture was for some centuries regarded as the chief measure of human excellence, that tens of thousands of the most devoted men fled to the desert to reduce themselves by maceration nearly to the condition of the brute, and that this odious superstition had acquired an almost absolute ascendancy in the ethics of the age. The examples of asceticism I have cited are but a few out of many hundreds, and volumes might be written, and have been written, detailing them. Till the reform of St. Benedict the ideal was, on the whole, unchanged. The Western monks, from the conditions of their climate, were constitutionally incapable of rivalling the abstinence of the Egyptian anchorites; but their conception of supreme excellence was much the same, and they laboured to compensate for their inferiority in penances by claiming some superiority in miracles. From the time of St. Pachomius the cœnobitic life was adopted by most monks; but the Eastern monasteries, with the important exception of a vow of obedience, differed little from a collection of hermitages. They were in the deserts; the monks commonly lived in separate cells; they kept silence at their repasts; they rivalled one another in the extravagance of their penances. A few feeble efforts were indeed made by St. Jerome and others to moderate austerities which frequently led to insanity and suicide, to check the turbulence of certain wandering monks, who were accustomed to defy the ecclesiastical authorities, and especially to suppress monastic mendicancy, which had appeared prominently among some heretical sects. The orthodox monks commonly employed themselves in weaving mats of palm-leaves; but, living in the deserts, with no wants, they speedily sank into a listless apathy; and the most admired were those who, like Simeon Stylites and the hermit John, of whom I have already spoken, were most exclusively devoted to their superstition. Diversities of individual character were, however, vividly displayed. Many anchorites, without knowledge, passions, or imagination, having fled from servile toil to the calm of the wilderness, passed the long hours in sleep or in a mechanical routine of

¹ See his Life by his disciple Antony, in the *Vita Patrum*, Evagrius, i. 13, 14. Theodoret, *Philothecos*, cap. xxvi.

prayer, and their inert and languid existences, prolonged to the extreme of old age, closed at last by a tranquil and almost animal death. Others made their cells by the clear fountains and clustering palm-trees of some oasis in the desert, and a blooming garden arose beneath their toil. The numerous monks who followed St. Serapion devoted themselves largely to agriculture, and sent shiploads of corn for the benefit of the poor.¹ Of one old hermit it is related that such was the cheerfulness of his mind, that every sorrow was dispelled by his presence, and the weary and the heartbroken were consoled by a few words from his lips.² More commonly, however, the hermit's cell was the scene of perpetual mourning. Tears and sobs, and frantic strugglings with imaginary dæmons, and paroxysms of religious despair, were the texture of his life, and the dread of spiritual enemies, and of that death which his superstition had rendered so terrible, embittered every hour of his existence.³ The solace of intellectual occupations was rarely resorted to. "The duty," said St. Jerome, "of a monk is not to teach, but to weep."⁴ A cultivated and disciplined mind was the least subject to those hallucinations which were regarded as the highest evidence of Divine favour;⁵ and although, in an age when the passion for asceticism was general, many scholars became ascetics, the great majority of the early

monks appear to have been men who were not only absolutely ignorant themselves, but who also looked upon learning with positive disfavour. St. Antony, the true founder of monachism, refused when a boy to learn letters, because it would bring him into too great intercourse with other boys.⁶ At a time when St. Jerome had suffered himself to feel a deep admiration for the genius of Cicero, he was, as he himself tells us, borne in the night before the tribunal of Christ, accused of being rather a Ciceronian than a Christian, and severely flogged by the angels.⁷ This saint, however, afterwards modified his opinions about the pagan writings, and he was compelled to defend himself at length against his more jealous brethren, who accused him of defiling his writings with quotations from pagan authors, of employing some monks in copying Cicero, and of explaining Virgil to some children at Bethlehem.⁸ Of one monk it is related that, being especially famous as a linguist, he made it his penance to remain perfectly silent for thirty years;⁹ of another that, having discovered a few books in the cell of a brother hermit, he reproached the student with having thus defrauded of their property the widow and the orphan;¹⁰ of others, that their only books were copies of the New Testament, which they sold to relieve the poor.¹¹

With such men, living such a life, visions and miracles were necessarily habitual. All the elements of hallucination were there. Ignorant and superstitious, believing as a matter of religious conviction that countless dæmons filled the air, attributing every fluctuation of his temperament, and every exceptional phenomenon in surrounding nature, to spiritual agency; delirious, too, from

¹ Palladius, *Hist. Laus* lxxvi.

² Rufinus, *Hist. Monach.* xxvii.

³ We have a striking illustration of this in St. Arsenius. His eyelashes are said to have fallen off through continual weeping, and he had always, when at work, to put a cloth on his breast to receive his tears. As he felt his death approaching, his terror rose to the point of agony. The monks who were about him said, "Quid fles, pater? numquid et tu times?" Ille respondit, "In veritate timeo, et iste timor qui nunc mecum est, semper in me fuit, ex quo factus sum monachus." (*Verba Seniorum*, Prol. § 163.) It was said of St. Abraham that no day passed after his conversion without his shedding tears. (*Vit. Patrum*.) St. John the Dwarf once saw a monk laughing immoderately at dinner, and was so horrified that he at once began to cry. (Tillemont, *Mém. de l'Hist. Ecclés.* tome x. p. 430.) St. Basil (*Regule*, interrog. xvi.) gives a remarkable disquisition on the wickedness of laughing, and he observes that this was the one bodily affection which Christ does not seem to have known. Mr. Buckle has collected a series of passages to precisely the same effect from the writings of the Scotch divines. (*Hist. of Civilization*, vol. II pp. 385-386.)

⁴ "Monachus autem non doctoris habet sed plangentis officium." (*Contr. Vigilant.* xv.)

⁵ As Tillemont puts it, "Il se trouva très-peu de saints en qui Dieu ait joint les talents extérieurs de l'éloquence et de la science avec la grâce de la prophétie et des miracles. Ce sont des dons que sa Providence a presque toujours séparés." (*Mém. Hist. Ecclés.* tome iv. p. 315.)

⁶ St. Athanasius, *Vit. Anton.*

⁷ *Ep.* xxii. He says his shoulders were bruised when he awoke.

⁸ *Ep.* lxx, *Adv. Rufinum*, lib. I. ch. xxx. He there speaks of his vision as a mere dream, not binding. He elsewhere (*Ep.* cxv.) speaks very sensibly of the advantage of hermits occupying themselves, and says he learnt Hebrew to keep away unholy thoughts.

⁹ Sozomen, vi. 28, Rufinus, *Hist. Monach.* ch. vi. Socrates tells rather a touching story of one of these illiterate saints, named Pambos. Being unable to read, he came to someone to be taught a psalm. Having learnt the single verse, "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue," he went away, saying that was enough if it were practically acquired. When asked, six months, and again many years, after, why he did not come to learn another verse, he answered that he had never been able truly to master this. (*H. E.* iv. 23.)

¹⁰ Tillemont, x. p. 61.

¹¹ *Ibid.* viii. 490, Socrates, *H. E.* iv. 23.

solitude and long-continued austerities, the hermit soon mistook for palpable realities the phantoms of his brain. In the ghastly gloom of the sepulchre, where, amid mouldering corpses, he took up his abode; in the long hours of the night of penance, when the desert wind sobbed around his lonely cell, and the cries of wild beasts were borne upon his ear, visiole forms of lust or terror appeared to haunt him, and strange dramas were enacted by those who were contending for his soul. An imagination strained to the utmost limit, acting upon a frame attenuated and diseased by macerations, produced bewildering psychological phenomena, paroxysms of conflicting passions, sudden alternations of joy and anguish, which he regarded as manifestly supernatural. Sometimes, in the very ecstasy of his devotion, the memory of old scenes would crowd upon his mind. The shady groves and soft, voluptuous gardens of his native city would arise, and, kneeling alone upon the burning sand, he seemed to see around him the fair groups of dancing girls, on whose warm, undulating limbs and wanton smiles his youthful eyes had too fondly dwelt. Sometimes his temptation sprang from remembered sounds. The sweet, licentious songs of other days came floating on his ear, and his heart was thrilled with the passions of the past. And then the scene would change. As his lips were murmuring the psalter his imagination, fired perhaps by the music of some martial psalm, depicted the crowded amphitheatre. The throng and passion and mingled cries of eager thousands were present to his mind, and the fierce joy of the gladiators passed through the tumult of his dream.¹ The simplest incident came at last to suggest diabolical influence. An old hermit, weary and fainting upon his journey, once thought how refreshing would be a draught of the honey of wild bees of the desert. At that moment his

eye fell upon a rock on which they had built a hive. He passed on with a shudder and an exorcism, for he believed it to be a temptation of the devil.² But most terrible of all were the struggles of young and ardent men, through whose veins the hot blood of passion continually flowed, physically incapable of a life of celibacy, and with all that proneness to hallucination which a southern sun engenders, who were borne on the wave of enthusiasm to the desert life. In the arms of Syrian or African brides, whose soft eyes answered love with love, they might have sunk to rest, but in the lonely wilderness no peace could ever visit their souls. The Lives of the Saints paint with an appalling vividness the agonies of their struggle. Multiplying with frantic energy the macerations of the body, beating their breasts with anguish, the tears for ever streaming from their eyes, imagining themselves continually haunted by ever-changing forms of deadly beauty, which acquired a greater vividness from the very passion with which they resisted them, their struggles not unfrequently ended in insanity and in suicide. It is related that when St. Pachomius and St. Palæmon were conversing together in the desert, a young monk, with his countenance distracted with madness, rushed into their presence, and in a voice broken with convulsive sobs poured out his tale of sorrows. A woman, he said, had entered his cell, had seduced him by her artifices, and then vanished miraculously in the air, leaving him half dead upon the ground; and then, with a wild shriek, the monk broke away from the saintly listeners. Impelled, as they imagined, by an evil spirit, he rushed across the desert till he arrived at the next village, and there, leaping into the open furnace of the public baths, he perished in the flames.³ Strange stories were told among the monks of revulsions of passion even in the most advanced. Of one monk especially, who had long been regarded as a pattern of asceticism, but who had suffered himself to fall into that self-complacency which was very common among the anchorites, it was told that one evening a fainting woman appeared at the door of his cell and implored him to give her shelter, and not permit her to be devoured by the wild

¹ I have combined in this passage incidents from three distinct lives. St. Jerome, in a very famous and very beautiful passage of his letter to Eustochium (*Ep. xxi*), describes the manner in which the forms of dancing-girls appeared to surround him as he knelt upon the desert sands. St. Mary of Egypt (*Vite Patrum*, ch. xix.) was especially tortured by the recollection of the songs she had sung when young, which continually haunted her mind. St. Hilarion (see his *Life* by St. Jerome) thought he saw a gladiatorial show while he was repeating the psalms. The manner in which the different visions faded into one another like dissolving views is repeatedly described in the biographies.

² Rufinus, *Hist. Monach.* ch. xi. This saint was St. Helenus.

³ Life of St. Pachomius (*Vit. Patrum*), cap. ix.

beasts. In an evil hour he yielded to her prayer. With all the aspect of profound reverence she won his regards, and at last ventured to lay her hand upon him. But that touch convulsed his frame. Passions long slumbering and forgotten rushed with impetuous fury through his veins. In a paroxysm of fierce love he sought to clasp the woman to his heart; but she vanished from his sight, and a chorus of dæmons, with peals of laughter, exulted over his fall. The sequel of the story, as it is told by the monkish writer, is, I think, of a very high order of artistic merit. The fallen hermit did not seek, as might have been expected, by penance and prayers to renew his purity. That moment of passion and of shame had revealed in him a new nature, and severed him irrevocably from the hopes and feelings of the ascetic life. The fair form that had arisen upon his dream, though he knew it to be a deception luring him to destruction, still governed his heart. He fled from the desert, plunged anew into the world, avoided all intercourse with the monks, and followed the light of that ideal beauty even into the jaws of hell.²

Anecdotes of this kind, circulated among the monks, contributed to heighten the feelings of terror with which they regarded all communication with the other sex. But to avoid such communication was sometimes very difficult. Few things are more striking in the early historians of the movement we are considering than the manner in which narratives of the deepest tragical interest alternate with extremely whimsical accounts of the profound admiration with which the female devotees regarded the most austere anchorites, and the unwearied perseverance with which they endeavoured to force themselves upon their notice. Some women seem in this respect to have been peculiarly fortunate. St. Melania, who devoted a great portion of her fortune to the monks, accompanied by the historian

Rufinus, made, near the end of the fourth century, a long pilgrimage through the Syrian and Egyptian hermitages.³ But with many of the hermits it was a rule never to look upon the face of any woman, and the number of years they had escaped this contamination was commonly stated as a conspicuous proof of their excellence. St. Basil would only speak to a woman under extreme necessity.⁴ St. John of Lycopolis had not seen a woman for forty-eight years.⁵ A tribune was sent by his wife on a pilgrimage to St. John the Hermit to implore him to allow her to visit him, her desire being so intense that she would probably, in the opinion of her husband, die if it were ungratified. At last the hermit told his suppliant that he would that night visit his wife when she was in bed in her house. The tribune brought this strange message to his wife, who that night saw the hermit in a dream.⁶ A young Roman girl made a pilgrimage from Italy to Alexandria, to look upon the face and obtain the prayers of St. Arsenius, into whose presence she forced herself. Quailing beneath his rebuffs, she flung herself at his feet, imploring him with tears to grant her only request—to remember her and to pray for her. "Remember you!" cried the indignant saint; "it shall be the prayer of my life that I may forget you." The poor girl sought consolation from the Archbishop of Alexandria, who comforted her by assuring her that, though she belonged to the sex by which dæmons commonly tempt saints, he doubted not the hermit would pray for her soul, though he would try to forget her face.⁷ Sometimes this female enthusiasm took another and a more subtle form; and on more than one occasion women were known to attire themselves as men, and to pass their lives undisturbed as anchorites. Among others St. Pelagia, who had been the most beautiful and one of the most dangerously seductive actresses of Antioch, having been somewhat strangely converted, was appointed by the bishops to live in penance with an elderly virgin of irreproachable

² Rufinus, *Hist. Monach.* cap. i. This story was told to Rufinus by St. John the Hermit. The same saint described his own visions very graphically: "Denique etiam me frequenter dæmones noctibus seduxerunt, et neque orare neque requiescere permiserunt, phantasias quasdam per noctem totam sensibus meis et cogitationes suggerentes. Mane vero velut cum quadam illusione prosternebant se ante me dicentes, Indulge nobis, abbas, quia laborem tibi incussimus tota nocte." (*Ibid.*) St. Benedict in the desert is said to have been tortured by the recollection of a beautiful girl he had once seen, and only regained his composure by rolling in thorns. (St. Greg. *Dial.* ii. 2.)

³ She lived also for some time in a convent at Jerusalem, which she had founded. Melania (who was one of St. Jerome's friends) was a lady of rank and fortune, who devoted her property to the monks. See her journey in Rosweyde, lib. ii.

⁴ See his *Life* in Tillemont.

⁵ *Ibid.* x. p. 14. A certain Didymus lived entirely alone till his death, which took place when he was ninety. (Socrates, *H. E.* iv. 23.)

⁶ Rufinus, *Hist. Monachorum*, cap. i.

⁷ *Verba Seniorum*, § 65.

piety; but impelled we are told, by her desire for a more austere life, she fled from her companion, assumed a male attire, took refuge among the monks on the Mount of Olives, and, with something of the skill of her old profession, supported her feigned character so consistently that she acquired great renown, and it was only (it is said) after her death that the saints discovered who had been living among them.²

The foregoing anecdotes and observations will, I hope, have given a sufficiently clear idea of the general nature of the monastic life in its earliest phase, and also of the writings it produced. We may now proceed to examine the ways in which this mode of life affected both the ideal type and the realised condition of Christian morals. And, in the first place, it is manifest that the proportion of virtues was altered. If an impartial person were to glance over the ethics of the New Testament, and were asked what was the central and distinctive virtue to which the sacred writers most continually referred, he would, doubtless, answer that it was that which is described as love, charity, or philanthropy. If he were to apply a similar scrutiny to the writings of the fourth and fifth centuries, he would answer that the cardinal virtue of the religious type was not love, but chastity. And this chastity, which was regarded as the ideal state, was not the purity of an undefiled marriage. It was the absolute suppression of the whole sensual side of our nature. The chief form of virtue, the central conception of the saintly life, was a perpetual struggle against all carnal impulses by men who altogether refused the compromise of marriage. From this fact, if I mistake not, some interesting and important consequences may be deduced.

² Pelagia was very pretty, and, according to her own account, "her sins were heavier than the sand." The people of Antioch, who were very fond of her, called her Margarita, or the pearl. "Il arriva un jour que divers évêques, appelez par celui d'Antioche pour quelques affaires, étant ensemble à la porte de l'église de S.-Julien, Pelagie passa devant eux dans tout l'éclat des pompes du diable, n'ayant pas seulement une coiffe sur sa tête ni un mouchoir sur ses épaules, ce qu'on remarquait comme le comble de son impudence. Tous les évêques baissèrent les yeux en gémissant pour ne pas voir ce dangereux objet de péché, hors Nonne, trés-saint évêque d'Hélioïpe, qui la regarda avec une attention qui fit peine aux autres." However, this bishop immediately began crying a great deal, and reassured his brethren, and a sermon which he preached led to the conversion of the actress. (Tillemont, *Mém. d'Hist. Eccles.* tome xii pp 378-380. See, too, on women, "under pretence of religion," attiring themselves as men, Sozomen, iii. 14.)

In the first place, religion gradually assumed a very sombre hue. The business of the saint was to eradicate a natural appetite, to attain a condition which was emphatically abnormal. The depravity of human nature, especially the essential evil of the body, was felt with a degree of intensity that could never have been attained by moralists who were occupied mainly with transient or exceptional vices, such as envy, anger, or cruelty. And, in addition to the extreme inveteracy of the appetite which it was desired to eradicate, it should be remembered that a somewhat luxurious and indulgent life, even when that indulgence is not itself distinctly evil, even when it has a tendency to mollify the character, has naturally the effect of strengthening the animal passions, and is, therefore, directly opposed to the ascetic ideal. The consequence of this was, first of all, a very deep sense of the habitual and innate depravity of human nature; and, in the next place, a very strong association of the idea of pleasure with that of vice. All this necessarily flowed from the supreme value placed upon virginity. The tone of calm and joyousness that characterises Greek philosophy, the almost complete absence of all sense of struggle and innate sin that it displays, is probably in a very large degree to be ascribed to the fact that, in the department of morals we are considering, Greek moralists made no serious efforts to improve our nature, and Greek public opinion acquiesced without scandal in an almost boundless indulgence of illicit pleasures.

But while the great prominence at this time given to the conflicts of the ascetic life threw a dark shade upon the popular estimate of human nature, it contributed, I think, very largely to sustain and deepen that strong conviction of the freedom of the human will which the Catholic Church has always so strenuously upheld; for there is probably no other form of moral conflict in which men are so habitually and so keenly sensible of that distinction between our will and our desires, upon the reality of which all moral freedom ultimately depends. It had also, I imagine, another result, which it is difficult to describe with the same precision. What may be called a strong animal nature—a nature, that is, in which the passions are in vigorous, and at the same time healthy, action—is that in which we should most naturally expect to find several moral

qualities. Good humour, frankness, generosity, active courage, sanguine energy, buoyancy of temper, are the usual and appropriate accompaniments of a vigorous animal temperament, and they are much more rarely found either in natures that are essentially feeble and effeminate, or in natures which have been artificially emasculated by penances, distorted from their original tendency, and habitually held under severe control. The ideal type of Catholicism being, on account of the supreme value placed upon virginity, of the latter kind, the qualities I have mentioned have always ranked very low in the Catholic conceptions of excellence, and the steady tendency of Protestant and industrial civilisation has been to elevate them.

I do not know whether the reader will regard these speculations—which I advance with some diffidence—as far-fetched and fanciful. Our knowledge of the physical antecedents of different moral qualities is so scanty that it is difficult to speak on these matters with much confidence; but few persons, I think, can have failed to observe that the physical temperaments I have described differ, not simply in the one great fact of the intensity of the animal passions, but also in the aptitude of each to produce a distinct moral type, or, in other words, in the harmony of each with several qualities, both good and evil. A doctrine, therefore, which connects one of these two temperaments indissolubly with the moral ideal affects the appreciation of a large number of moral qualities. But whatever may be thought of the moral results springing from the physical temperament which asceticism produced, there can be little controversy as to the effects springing from the condition of life which it enjoined. Severance from the interests and affections of all around him was the chief object of the anchorite, and the first consequence of the prominence of asceticism was a profound discredit thrown upon the domestic virtues.

The extent to which this discredit was carried, the intense hardness of heart and ingratitude manifested by the saints towards those who were bound to them by the closest of earthly ties, is known to few who have not studied the original literature on the subject. These things are commonly thrown into the shade by those modern sentimentalists who delight in idealising the devotees of the past. To

break by his ingratitude the heart of the mother who had borne him, to persuade the wife who adored him that it was her duty to separate from him for ever, to abandon his children, uncared for and beggars, to the mercies of the world, was regarded by the true hermit as the most acceptable offering he could make to his God. His business was to save his own soul. The serenity of his devotion would be impaired by the discharge of the simplest duties to his family. Evagrius, when a hermit in the desert, received, after a long interval, letters from his father and mother. He could not bear that the equable tenour of his thoughts should be disturbed by the recollection of those who loved him, so he cast the letters unread into the fire.¹ A man named Mutius, accompanied by his only child, a little boy of eight years old, abandoned his possessions and demanded admission into a monastery. The monks received him, but they proceeded to discipline his heart. "He had already forgotten that he was rich; he must next be taught to forget that he was a father."² His little child was separated from him, clothed in dirty rags, subjected to every form of gross and wanton hardship, beaten, spurned, and ill-treated. Day after day the father was compelled to look upon his boy wasting away with sorrow, his once happy countenance for ever stained with tears, distorted by sobs of anguish. But yet, says the admiring biographer, "though he saw this day by day, such was his love for Christ, and for the virtue of obedience, that the father's heart was rigid and unmoved. He thought little of the tears of his child. He was anxious only for his own humility and perfection in virtue."³ At last the abbot told him to take his child and throw it into the river.

¹ Tillemont, tome x pp 376, 377. Apart from family affections, there are some curious instances recorded of the anxiety of the saints to avoid distractions. One monk used to cover his face when he went into his garden, lest the sight of the trees should disturb his mind. (*Verba Senorum*) St. Arsenius could not bear the rustling of the reeds (*ibid*); and a saint named Boniface struck dead a man who went about with an ape and a cymbal, because he had (apparently quite unintentionally) disturbed him at his prayers. (*St Greg Dial* i. 9.)

² "Quemadmodum se jam divitem non esse sciebat, ita etiam patrem se esse nesciret." (Cassian, *De Conventuum Institutis*, iv. 27.)

³ "Cumque taliter infans sub oculis ejus per dies singulos ageretur, pro amore nihilominus Christi et obedientiae virtute, rigida semper atque immobilis patris viscera permanserunt parum cogitans de lacrimis ejus, sed de propria humilitate ac perfectione sollicitus." (*ibid*.)

He proceeded without a murmur or apparent pang, to obey, and it was only at the last moment that the monks interposed, and on the very brink of the river saved the child. Mutius afterwards rose to a high position among the ascetics, and was justly regarded as having displayed in great perfection the temper of a saint.² An inhabitant of Thebes once came to the abbot Sisoës and asked to be made a monk. The abbot asked if he had anyone belonging to him. He answered, "A son." "Take your son," rejoined the old man, "and throw him into the river, and then you may become a monk." The father hastened to fulfil the command, and the deed was almost consummated when a messenger sent by Sisoës revoked the order.³

Sometimes the same lesson was taught under the form of a miracle. A man had once deserted his three children to become a monk. Three years after he determined to bring them into the monastery, but, on returning to his home, found that the two eldest had died during his absence. He came to his abbot, bearing in his arms his youngest child, who was still little more than an infant. The abbot turned to him and said, "Do you love this child?" The father answered, "Yes." Again the abbot said, "Do you love it dearly?" The father answered as before. "Then take the child," said the abbot, "and throw it into the fire upon yonder hearth." The father did as he was commanded, and the child remained unharmed amid the flames.⁴ But it was especially in their dealings with their female relations that this aspect of the monastic character was vividly displayed. In this case the motive was not simply to mortify family affections—it was also to guard against the possible danger resulting from the presence of a woman. The fine flower of that saintly purity might have been disturbed by the sight of a mother's or a sister's face. The ideal of one age appears sometimes too grotesque for the caricature of another; and it is curious to observe how pale and weak is the picture which Molière drew of the affected prudery of Tartuife,⁵ when com-

pared with the narratives that are gravely propounded in the Lives of the Saints. When the abbot Sisoës had become a very old, feeble, and decrepit man, his disciples exhorted him to leave the desert for an inhabited country. Sisoës seemed to yield; but he stipulated, as a necessary condition, that in his new abode he should never be compelled to encounter the peril and perturbation of looking on a woman's face. To such a nature, of course, the desert alone was suitable, and the old man was suffered to die in peace.⁶ A monk was once travelling with his mother—in itself a most unusual circumstance—and, having arrived at a bridgeless stream, it became necessary for him to carry her across. To her surprise, he began carefully wrapping up his hands in cloths; and upon her asking the reason, he explained that he was alarmed lest he should be unfortunate enough to touch her, and thereby disturb the equilibrium of his nature.⁷ The sister of St. John of Calama loved him dearly, and earnestly implored him that she might look upon his face once more before she died. On his persistent refusal, she declared that she would make a pilgrimage to him in the desert. The alarmed and perplexed saint at last wrote to her, promising to visit her if she would engage to relinquish her design. He went to her in disguise, received a cup of water from her hands, and came away without being discovered. She wrote to him, reproaching him with not having fulfilled his promise. He answered her that he had indeed visited her, that "by the mercy of Jesus Christ he had not been recognised," and that she must never see him again.⁸ The mother of St. Theodorus came armed with letters from the bishops to see her son, but he implored his abbot, St. Pachomius, to permit him to decline the interview; and, finding all her efforts in vain, the poor woman retired into a convent, together with her daughter, who had made a similar expedition with

TARTUFE.

Couvrez ce sein que je ne saurois voir;
Par de pareils objets des âmes sont blessées,
Et cela fait venir de coupables pensées.

—Tartuife, Acte iii scène 2.

² Bollandists, July 6.

³ *Verba Seniorum*, iv. The poor woman, being startled and perplexed at the proceedings of her son, said: "Quid sic operuisti manus tuas, fili? Ille autem dixit: Quia corpus mulieris ignis est, et ex eo ipso quod te contingebam veniebat mihi commemoratio aliarum feminarum in animo."

⁴ Tillemont, *Mém. de l'Hist. Ecclés.* tome x. pp. 444.

445.

² Cassian, *De Conobiorum Institutis*, iv. 27.

³ Bollandists, July 6; *Verba Seniorum*, xiv.

⁴ *Verba Seniorum*, xiv.

⁵ TARTUFE (*tirant un mouchoir de sa poche*).

"Ah, mon Dieu, je vous prie,
Avant que de parler, prenez-moi ce mouchoir."

Comment!

DORINE.

similar results.¹ The mother of St. Marcus persuaded his abbot to command the saint to go out to her. Placed in a dilemma between the sin of disobedience and the perils of seeing his mother, St. Marcus extricated himself by an ingenious device. He went to his mother with his face disguised and his eyes shut. The mother did not recognise her son. The son did not see his mother.² The sister of St. Pior in like manner induced the abbot of that saint to command him to admit her to his presence. The command was obeyed, but St. Pior resolutely kept his eyes shut during the interview.³ St. Pœmen and his six brothers had all deserted their mother to cultivate the perfections of an ascetic life. But ingratitude can seldom quench the love of a mother's heart, and the old woman, now bent by infirmities, went alone into the Egyptian desert to see once more the children she so dearly loved. She caught sight of them as they were about to leave their cell for the church, but they immediately ran back into the cell, and, before her tottering steps could reach it, one of her sons rushed forward and closed the door in her face. She remained outside weeping bitterly. St. Pœmen then, coming to the door, but without opening it, said: "Why do you, who are already stricken with age, pour forth such cries and lamentations?" But she, recognising the voice of her son, answered: "It is because I long to see you, my sons. What harm could it do you that I should see you? Am I not your mother? did I not give you suck? I am now an old and wrinkled woman, and my heart is troubled at the sound of your voices."⁴ The saintly brothers,

however, refused to open their door. They told their mother that she would see them after death; and the biographer says she at last went away contented with the prospect. St. Simeon Stylites, in this as in other respects, stands in the first line. He had been passionately loved by his parents, and, if we may believe his eulogist and biographer, he began his saintly career by breaking the heart of his father, who died of grief at his flight. His mother, however, lingered on. Twenty-seven years after his disappearance, at a period when his austerities had made him famous, she heard for the first time where he was, and hastened to visit him. But all her labour was in vain. No woman was admitted within the precincts of his dwelling, and he refused to permit her even to look upon his face. Her entreaties and tears were mingled with words of bitter and eloquent reproach.⁵ "My son," she is represented as having said, "why have you done this? I bore you in my womb, and you have wrung my soul with grief. I gave you milk from my breast, you have filled my eyes with tears. For the kisses I gave you, you have given me the anguish of a broken heart; for all that I have done and suffered for you, you have repaid me by the most cruel wrongs." At last the saint sent a message to tell her that she would soon see him. Three days and three nights she had wept and entreated in vain, and now, exhausted with grief and age and privation, she sank feebly to the ground and breathed her last sigh before that inhospitable door. Then for the first time the saint, accompanied by his followers, came out. He shed some pious tears over the corpse of his murdered mother, and offered up a prayer consigning her soul to heaven. Perhaps it was but fancy, perhaps life was not yet wholly extinct, perhaps the story is but the invention of the biographer; but a faint motion—which appears to have been regarded as miraculous—is said to have passed over her prostrate form. Simeon once more commended her soul to heaven, and then,

vous voir m'a tellement émue que je suis presque tombée en défaillance." (*Mémoires de l'Hist. Ecclésiastique*, tome xv. pp. 157, 158.)

² The original is much more eloquent than my translation. "Fili, quare hoc fecisti? Pro utero quo te portavi, satiasti me luctu, pro lactatione qua te lactavi dedisti mihi lacrymas, pro osculo quo te osculata sum, dedisti mihi amaros cordis angustias; pro dolore et labore quem passa sum, imposuisti mihi gravissimas plagas." (*Vita Simeonis*, in Rosweyde.)

¹ *Vit. S. Pachomius*, ch. xxxi.; *Verba Seniorum*.

² *Verba Seniorum*, xiv.

³ Palladius, *Hist. Laus*, cap. lxxxvii

⁴ Bollandists, June 6. I avail myself again of the version of Tillemont: "Lorsque S. Pœmen demeurait en Egypte avec ses frères, leur mère, qui avoit un extrême désir de les voir, venoit souvent au lieu où ils estoient, sans pouvoir jamais avoir cette satisfaction. Une fois enfin elle prit si bien son temps qu'elle les rencontra qui alloient à l'église, mais dès qu'ils la virent ils s'en retournèrent en hâte dans leur cellule et fermèrent la porte sur eux. Elle les suivit, et trouvant la porte, elle les appelloit avec des larmes et des cris capables de les toucher de compassion... Pœmen s'y leva et s'y en alla, et l'entendant pleurer il lui dit, tenant toujours la porte fermée, 'Pourquoi vous lassez-vous inutilement à pleurer et crier? N'êtes-vous pas déjà assez abattue par la vieillesse?' Elle reconnut la voix de Pœmen, et s'efforçant encore davantage, elle s'écria, 'Hé, mes enfans, c'est que je voudrais bien vous voir: et quel mal y a-t-il que je vous voie? Ne suis-je pas votre mère, et ne vous ai-je pas nourri du lait de mes mamelles? Je suis déjà toute pleine de rides, et lorsque je vous ay entendu, l'extrême envie que j'ay de

amid the admiring murmurs of his disciples, the saintly matricide returned to his devotions.

The glaring mendacity that characterises the Lives of the Catholic Saints, probably to a greater extent than any other important branch of existing literature, makes it not unreasonable to hope that many of the foregoing anecdotes represent much less events that actually took place than ideal pictures generated by the enthusiasm of the chroniclers. They are not, however, on that account the less significant of the moral conceptions which the ascetic period had created. The ablest men in the Christian community vied with one another in inculcating as the highest form of duty the abandonment of social ties and the mortification of domestic affections. A few faint restrictions were indeed occasionally made. Much—on which I shall hereafter touch—was written on the liberty of husbands and wives deserting one another; and something was written on the cases of children forsaking or abandoning their parents. At first, those who, when children, were devoted to the monasteries by their parents, without their own consent, were permitted, when of mature age, to return to the world; and this liberty was taken from them for the first time by the fourth Council of Toledo, in A.D. 633.¹ The Council of Gangra condemned the heretic Eustathius for teaching that children might, through religious motives, forsake their parents, and St. Basil wrote in the same strain;² but cases of this kind of rebellion against parental authority were continually recounted with admiration in the Lives of the Saints, applauded by some of the leading Fathers, and virtually sanctioned by a law of Justinian, which deprived parents of the power of either restraining their children from entering monasteries, or disinheriting them if they had done so without their consent.³ St. Chrysostom relates with enthusiasm the case of a young man who had been designed by his father for the army, and who was lured away to a monastery.⁴ The eloquence of St. Ambrose is said to have been so seductive that mothers were accustomed to shut up their daughters to guard them against his fascinations.⁵

The position of affectionate parents was at this time extremely painful. The touching language is still preserved in which the mother of Chrysostom—who had a distinguished part in the conversion of her son—implored him, if he thought it his duty to fly to the desert life, at least to postpone the act till she had died.¹ St. Ambrose devoted a chapter to proving that, while those are worthy of commendation who enter the monasteries with the approbation, those are still more worthy of praise who do so against the wishes, of their parents; and he proceeded to show how small were the penalties the latter could inflict when compared with the blessings asceticism could bestow.² Even before the law of Justinian, the invectives of the clergy were directed against those who endeavoured to prevent their children flying to the desert. St. Chrysostom explained to them that they would certainly be damned.³ St. Ambrose showed that, even in this world, they might not be unpunished. A girl, he tells us, had resolved to enter into a convent, and as her relations were expostulating with her on her intention, one of those present tried to move her by the memory of her dead father, asking whether, if he were still alive, he would have suffered her to remain unmarried. "Perhaps," she calmly answered, "it was for this very purpose he died, that he should not throw any obstacle in my way." Her words were more than an answer; they were an oracle. The indiscreet questioner almost immediately died, and the relations, shocked by the manifest providence, desisted from their opposition, and even implored the young saint to accomplish her design.⁴ St. Jerome tells with rapturous enthusiasm of a little girl, named Asella, who, when only twelve years old, devoted herself to the religious life and refused to look on the face of any man, and whose knees, by constant prayer, became at last like those of a camel.⁵ A famous widow, named Paula, upon the death of her husband, deserted her family, listened with "dry eyes" to her children, who were imploring her to stay, fled to the society of the monks at Jerusalem, made it her desire that "she might die a beggar, and leave not one piece of money

¹ Bingham, *Antiquities*, book vii. ch. iii. ² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Milman's *Early Christianity* (ed. 1867), vol. iii. p. 122.

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. iii. p. 253.

¹ Milman's *Early Christianity*, vol. iii. p. 120.

² *De Virginitas*, i. 11.

³ See Milman's *Early Christianity*, vol. iii. p. 121.

⁴ *De Virginitas*, i. 11.

⁵ *Epist.* xxiiv.

to her son," and, having dissipated the whole of her fortune in charities, bequeathed to her children only the embarrassment of her debts.¹ It was carefully inculcated that all money given or bequeathed to the poor, or to the monks, produced spiritual benefit to the donors or testators, but that no spiritual benefit sprang from money bestowed upon relations; and the more pious minds recoiled from disposing of their property in a manner that would not redound to the advantage of their souls. Sometimes parents made it a dying request to their children that they would preserve none of their property, but would bestow it all among the poor.² It was one of the most honourable incidents of the life of St. Augustine that he, like Aurelius, Bishop of Carthage, refused to receive legacies or donations which unjustly spoliated the relatives of the benefactor.³ Usually, however, to outrage the affections of the nearest and dearest relations was not only regarded as innocent, but proposed as the highest virtue. "A young man," it was acutely said, "who has learnt to despise a mother's grief, will easily bear any other labour that is imposed upon him."⁴ St. Jerome, when exhorting Heliodorus to desert his family and become a hermit, expatiated with a fond minuteness on every form of natural affection he desired him to violate. "Though your little nephew twine his arms around your neck; though your mother, with dishevelled hair and tearing her robe asunder, point to the breast with which she suckled you; though your father fall down on the threshold

before you, pass on over your father's body. Fly with tearless eyes to the banner of the cross. In this matter cruelty is the only piety.....Your widowed sister may throw her gentle arms around you.....Your father may implore you to wait but a short time to bury those near to you, who will soon be no more; your weeping mother may recall your childish days, and may point to her shrunken breast and to her wrinkled brow. Those around you may tell you that all the household rests upon you. Such chains as these, the love of God and the fear of hell can easily break. You say that Scripture orders you to obey your parents, but he who loves them more than Christ loses his soul. The enemy brandishes a sword to slay me. Shall I think of a mother's tears?"⁵

The sentiment manifested in these cases continued to be displayed in later ages. Thus, St. Gregory the Great assures us that a certain young boy, though he had enrolled himself as a monk, was unable to repress his love for his parents, and one night stole out secretly to visit them. But the judgment of God soon marked the enormity of the offence. On coming back to the monastery, he died that very day, and when he was buried the earth refused to receive so heinous a criminal. His body was repeatedly thrown up from the grave, and it was only suffered to rest in peace when St. Benedict had laid the sacrament upon its breast.⁶ One nun revealed, it is said, after death, that she had been condemned for three days to the fires of purgatory, because she had loved her mother too much.⁷ Of another saint it is recorded that his benevolence was such that he was never known to be hard or inhuman to anyone except his relations.⁸ St. Romuald, the founder of the Camaldolites, counted his father among his spiritual children, and on one occasion punished him by flagellation.⁹ The first nun whom St. Francis of Assisi enrolled was a beautiful girl of Assisi named Clara Scifi, with whom he had for some time carried on a clandestine correspondence, and whose flight from her father's home he both counselled and

¹ St. Jerome describes the scene at her departure with admiring eloquence: "Descendit ad portum fratre, cognatus, affinis et quod majus est libens prosequentibus, et clementissimam matrem pietate vincere cupientibus. Jam carbasa tendebantur, et remorum ductu navis in altum protrahabatur. Fervens Toxotus supplices manus tendebat in littore, Rufina jam nubilis ut suas expectaret nuptias tacens fletibus obscurobat. Et tamen illa sicco tendebat ad cælum oculos, prestatem in filios pietate in Deum superans. Nesciebat se matrem ut Christi probaret ancillam" (*Ep. cvin.*). In another place he says of her: "Testis est Jesus, ne unum quidem nummum ab ea filie derelictum sed, ut ante jam dixi, derelictum magnum æs alienum" (*Ibid.*) And again: "Vis, lector, ejus breviter scire virtutes? Omnes suos pauperes, pauperior ipsa dimisit." (*Ibid.*)

² See Chastel, *Études historiques sur la Charité*, p. 231. The parents of St. Gregory Nazianzen had made this request, which was faithfully observed.

³ Chastel, p. 232.

⁴ See a characteristic passage from the *Life of St. Fulgentius*, quoted by Dean Milman. "Facile potest juvenis tolerare quemcumque imposuerit laborem qui potent matrem jam despicere dolorem." (*Hist. of Latin Christianity*, vol. ii p. 82.)

⁵ *Ep. xiv. (Ad Heliodorum)*

⁶ St. Greg. *Dial.* ii. 24.

⁷ Bollandists, May 3 (vol. vii. p. 661).

⁸ "Hospitibus omni loco ac tempore liberalissimus fuit. Solis consanguineis durus erat et inhumanus, tamquam ignotos illos respiciens." (Bollandists, May 29.)

⁹ See Helyot, *Dict. des Ordres religieux*, art. "Camaldules."

planned.¹ As the first enthusiasm of asceticism died away, what was lost in influence by the father was gained by the priest. The confessional made this personage the confidant in the most delicate secrets of domestic life. The supremacy of authority, of sympathy, and sometimes even of affection, passed away beyond the domestic circle, and, by establishing an absolute authority over the most secret thoughts and feelings of nervous and credulous women, the priests laid the foundation of the empire of the world.

The picture I have drawn of the inroads made in the first period of asceticism upon the domestic affections tells, I think, its own story, and I shall only add a very few words of comment. That it is necessary for many men who are pursuing a truly heroic course to break loose from the trammels which those about them would cast over their actions or their opinions, and that this severance often constitutes at once one of the noblest and one of the most painful incidents in their career, are unquestionable truths; but the examples of such occasional and exceptional sacrifices, endured for some great unselfish end, cannot be compared with the conduct of those who regarded the mortification of domestic love as in itself a form of virtue, and whose ends were mainly or exclusively selfish. The sufferings endured by the ascetic who fled from his relations were often, no doubt, very great. Many anecdotes remain to show that warm and affectionate hearts sometimes beat under the cold exterior of the monk;² and St. Jerome, in one of his letters, remarked, with much complacency and congratulation, that the very bitterest pang of captivity is simply this irrevocable separation which the superstition he preached induced multitudes to inflict upon themselves. But if, putting aside the intrinsic excellence of an act, we attempt to estimate the nobility of the agent, we must

consider not only the cost of what he did, but also the motive which induced him to do it. It is this last consideration which renders it impossible for us to place the heroism of the ascetic on the same level with that of the great patriots of Greece or Rome. A man may be as truly selfish about the next world as about this. Where an overpowering dread of future torments, or an intense realisation of future happiness, is the leading motive of action, the theological virtue of faith may be present, but the ennobling quality of disinterestedness is assuredly absent. In our day, when pictures of rewards and punishments beyond the grave act but feebly upon the imagination, a religious motive is commonly an unselfish motive; but it has not always been so, and it was undoubtedly not so in the first period of asceticism. The terrors of a future judgment drove the monk into the desert, and the whole tenour of the ascetic life, while isolating him from human sympathies, fostered an intense, though it may be termed a religious, selfishness.

The effect of the mortification of the domestic affections upon the general character was probably very pernicious. The family circle is the appointed sphere, not only for the performance of manifest duties, but also for the cultivation of the affections; and the extreme ferocity which so often characterised the ascetic was the natural consequence of the discipline he imposed upon himself. Severed from all other ties, the monks clung with a desperate tenacity to their opinions and to their Church, and hated those who dissented from them with all the intensity of men whose whole lives were concentrated on a single subject, whose ignorance and bigotry prevented them from conceiving the possibility of any good thing in opposition to themselves, and who had made it a main object of their discipline to eradicate all natural sympathies and affections. We may reasonably attribute to the fierce biographer the words of burning hatred of all heretics which St. Athanasius puts in the mouth of the dying patriarch of the hermits;³ but ecclesiastical history, and especially the writings of the later pagans, abundantly prove that the sentiment was a general one. To the Christian bishops it is mainly due that the wide and general,

¹ See the charming sketch in the *Life of St. Francis*, by Hase.

² The legend of St. Scholastica, the sister of St. Benedict, has been often quoted. He had visited her, and was about to leave in the evening, when she implored him to stay. He refused, and she then prayed to God, who sent so violent a tempest that the saint was unable to depart. (*St. Greg. Dial.* ii. 33.) Cassian speaks of a monk who thought it his duty never to see his mother, but who laboured for a whole year to pay off a debt she had incurred. (*Conob. Inst.* v. 38.) St. Jerome mentions the strong natural affection of Paula, though she considered it a virtue to mortify it. (*Ep.* cxxii.)

³ *Life of Antony*. See, too, the sentiments of St. Pachomius, *Vit.* cap. xxvii.

though not perfect, recognition of religious liberty in the Roman legislation was replaced by laws of the most minute and stringent intolerance. To the monks, acting as the executive of an omnipresent, intolerant, and aggressive clergy, is due an administrative change, perhaps even more important than the legislative change that had preceded it. The system of conniving at, neglecting, or despising forms of worship that were formally prohibited, which had been so largely practised by the sceptical pagans, and under the lax police system of the Empire, and which is so important a fact in the history of the rise of Christianity, was absolutely destroyed. Wandering in bands through the country, the monks were accustomed to burn the temples, to break the idols, to overthrow the altars, to engage in fierce conflicts with the peasants, who often defended with desperate courage the shrines of their gods. It would be impossible to conceive men more fitted for the task. Their fierce fanaticism, their persuasion that every idol was tenanted by a literal dæmon, and their belief that death incurred in this iconoclastic crusade was a form of martyrdom, made them careless of all consequences to themselves, while the reverence that attached to their profession rendered it scarcely possible for the civil power to arrest them. Men who had learnt to look with indifference on the tears of a broken-hearted mother, and whose ideal was indissolubly connected with the degradation of the body, were but little likely to be moved either by the pathos of old associations, and of reverent, though mistaken, worship, or by the grandeur of the Serapeum, or of the noble statues of Phidias and Praxiteles. Sometimes the civil power ordered the reconstruction of Jewish synagogues or heretical churches which had been illegally destroyed; but the doctrine was early maintained that such a reconstruction was a deadly sin. Under Julian some Christians suffered martyrdom sooner than be parties to it; and St. Ambrose from the pulpit of Milan, and Simeon Stylites from his desert pillar, united in denouncing Theodosius, who had been guilty of issuing this command.

Another very important moral result to which asceticism largely contributed was the depression and sometimes almost the extinction of the civic virtues. A candid examination will show that the Christian

civilisations have been as inferior to the pagan ones in civic and intellectual virtues as they have been superior to them in the virtues of humanity and of chastity. We have already seen that one remarkable feature of the intellectual movement that preceded Christianity was the gradual decadence of patriotism. In the early days both of Greece and Rome, the first duty enforced was that of a man to his country. This was the rudimentary or cardinal virtue of the moral type. It gave the tone to the whole system of ethics, and different moral qualities were valued chiefly in proportion to their tendency to form illustrious citizens. The destruction of this spirit in the Roman Empire was due, as we have seen, to two causes—one of them being political, and the other intellectual. The political cause was the amalgamation of the different nations in one great despotism, which gave indeed an ample field for personal and intellectual freedom, but extinguished the sentiment of nationality and closed almost every sphere of political activity. The intellectual cause, which was by no means unconnected with the political one, was the growing ascendancy of Oriental philosophies, which dethroned the active Stoicism of the early Empire, and placed its ideal of excellence in contemplative virtues and in elaborate purifications. By this decline of the patriotic sentiment the progress of the new faith was greatly aided. In all matters of religion the opinions of men are governed much more by their sympathies than by their judgments; and it rarely or never happens that a religion which is opposed to a strong national sentiment, as Christianity was in Judea, as Catholicism and Episcopalian Protestantism have been in Scotland, and as Anglicanism is even now in Ireland, can win the acceptance of the people.

The relations of Christianity to the sentiment of patriotism were from the first very unfortunate. While the Christians were, for obvious reasons, completely separated from the national spirit of Judea, they found themselves equally at variance with the lingering remnants of Roman patriotism. Rome was to them the power of Antichrist, and its overthrow the necessary prelude to the millennial reign. They formed an illegal organisation, directly opposed to the genius of the Empire, anticipating its speedy destruction, looking back with

something more than despondency to the fate of the heroes who adorned its past, and refusing resolutely to participate in those national spectacles which were the symbols and the expressions of patriotic feeling. Though scrupulously averse to all rebellion, they rarely concealed their sentiments, and the whole tendency of their teaching was to withdraw men as far as possible both from the functions and the enthusiasm of public life. It was at once their confession and their boast, that no interests were more indifferent to them than those of their country.¹ They regarded the lawfulness of taking arms as very questionable, and all those proud and aspiring qualities that constitute the distinctive beauty of the soldier's character as emphatically unchristian. Their home and their interests were in another world, and, provided only they were unmolested in their worship, they avowed with frankness, long after the Empire had become Christian, that it was a matter of indifference to them under what rule they lived.² Asceticism, drawing all the enthusiasm of Christendom to the desert life, and elevating as an ideal the extreme and absolute abnegation of all patriotism,³ formed the culmination of the movement, and was undoubtedly one cause of the downfall of the Roman Empire.

¹ "Nec ulla res aliena magis quam publica" (Ter-tullian, *Apol.* c. xxxviii)

² "Quid interest sub cuius imperio vivat homo moriturus, si illi qui imperant, ad impia et iniqua non cogant?" (St. Aug., *De Civ. Dei.* v. 17)

³ St. Jerome declares that "Monachum in patria sua perfectum esse non posse, perfectum autem esse nolle delinquere est." (*Ep.* xiv) Dean Milman well says of a later period: "According to the monastic view of Christianity, the total abandonment of the world, with all its ties and duties, as well as its treasures, its enjoyments and objects of ambition, advanced rather than diminished the hopes of salvation. Why should they fight for a perishing world, from which it was better to be estranged? It is singular, indeed, that while we have seen the Eastern monks turned into fierce undisciplined soldiers, perilling their own lives and shedding the blood of others without remorse, in assertion of some shadowy shade of orthodox expression, hardly anywhere do we find them asserting their liberties or their religion with intrepid resistance. Hatred of heresy was a more stirring motive than the dread of the danger of Islamism. After the first defeats the Christian mind was still further prostrated by the common notion that the invasion was a just and heaven-commissioned visitation: resistance a vain, almost an impious struggle to avert inevitable punishment." (Milman's *Latin Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 206) Compare Massillon's famous *Discours au Régiment de Catinat*: "Ce qu'il y a ici de plus déplorable, c'est que dans une vie rude et pénible, dans des emplois dont les devoirs passent quelquefois la rigueur des cloîtres les plus austères, vous souffrez toujours en vain pour l'autre vie. Dix ans de services ont plus usé votre corps qu'une vie entière de pénitence. un seul jour de ces souffrances, consacré au Seigneur, vous aurait peut-être valu un bonheur éternel."

There are probably few subjects on which popular judgments are commonly more erroneous than upon the relations between positive religions and moral enthusiasm. Religions have, no doubt, a most real power of evoking a latent energy which, without their existence, would never have been called into action; but their influence is on the whole probably more attractive than creative. They supply the channel in which moral enthusiasm flows, the banner under which it is enlisted, the mould in which it is cast, the ideal to which it tends. The first idea which the phrase "a very good man" would have suggested to an early Roman would probably have been that of great and distinguished patriotism, and the passion and interest of such a man in his country's cause were in direct proportion to his moral elevation. Ascetic Christianity decisively diverted moral enthusiasm into another channel, and the civic virtues, in consequence, necessarily declined. The extinction of all public spirit, the base treachery and corruption pervading every department of the government, the cowardice of the army, the despicable frivolity of character that led the people of Treves, when fresh from their burning city, to call for theatres and circuses, and the people of Roman Carthage to plunge wildly into the excitement of the chariot races, on the very day when their city succumbed beneath the Vandal!—all these things co-existed with extraordinary displays of ascetic and of missionary devotion. The genius and the virtue that might have defended the Empire were engaged in fierce disputes about the Pelagian controversy, at the very time when Alaric was encircling Rome with his armies,⁴ and there was no subtlety of theological metaphysics which did not kindle a deeper interest in the Christian leaders than the throes of their expiring country. The moral enthusiasm that in other days would have fired the armies of Rome with an invincible valour, impelled thousands to abandon their country and their homes, and consume the weary hours in a long routine of useless and horrible macerations. When the Goths

⁴ See a very striking passage in Salvian, *De Gubern. Dio.* lib. vi

⁵ Chateaubriand very truly says—"qu'Orose et saint Augustin étoient plus occupés du schisme de Pélage que de la désolation de l'Afrique et des Gaules." (*Études histor.* sixième discours, seconde partie.) The remark might certainly be extended much further.

had captured Rome, St. Augustine, as we have seen, pointed with a just pride to the Christian Church, which remained an unviolated sanctuary during the horrors of the sack, as a proof that a new spirit of sanctity and of reverence had descended upon the world. The pagan, in his turn, pointed to what he deemed a not less significant fact—the golden statues of Valour and of Fortune were melted down to pay the ransom to the conquerors.¹ Many of the Christians contemplated with an indifference that almost amounted to complacency what they regarded as the predicted ruin of the city of the fallen gods.² When the Vandals swept over Africa, the Donatists, maddened by the persecution of the orthodox, received them with open arms, and contributed their share to that deadly blow.³ The immortal pass of Thermopylæ was surrendered without a struggle to the Goths. A pagan writer accused the monks of having betrayed it.⁴ It is more probable that they had absorbed or diverted the heroism that in other days would have defended it. The conquest, at a later date, of Egypt, by the Mohammedans, was in a great measure due to an invitation from the persecuted Monophysites.⁵ Subsequent religious wars have again and again exhibited the same phenomenon. The treachery of a religionist to his country no longer argued an absence of all moral feeling. It had become compatible with the deepest religious enthusiasm, and with all the courage of a martyr.

It is somewhat difficult to form a just estimate of how far the attitude assumed by the Church towards the barbarian invaders has on the whole proved beneficial to mankind. The Empire, as we have seen, had long been, both morally

and politically, in a condition of manifest decline; its fall, though it might have been retarded, could scarcely have been averted, and the new religion, even in its most superstitious form, while it did much to displace, did also much to elicit moral enthusiasm. It is impossible to deny that the Christian priesthood contributed very materially, both by their charity and by their arbitration, to mitigate the calamities that accompanied the dissolution of the Empire;⁶ and it is equally impossible to doubt that their political attitude greatly increased their power for good. Standing between the conflicting forces, almost indifferent to the issue, and notoriously exempt from the passions of the combat, they obtained with the conqueror, and used for the benefit of the conquered, a degree of influence they would never have possessed had they been regarded as Roman patriots. Their attitude, however, marked a complete, and, as it has proved, a permanent, change in the position assigned to patriotism in the moral scale. It has occasionally happened in later times that churches have found it for their interest to appeal to this sentiment in their conflict with opposing creeds, or that patriots have found the objects of churchmen in harmony with their own; and in these cases a fusion of theological and patriotic feeling has taken place, in which each has intensified the other. Such has been the effect of the conflict between the Spaniards and the Moors, between the Poles and the Russians, between the Scotch Puritans and the English Episcopalians, between the Irish Catholics and the English Protestants. But patriotism itself, as a duty, has never found any place in Christian ethics, and strong theological feeling has usually been directly hostile to its growth. Ecclesiastics have, no doubt, taken a very large share in political affairs, but this has been in most cases solely with the object of wresting them into conformity with ecclesiastical designs; and no other body of men have so uniformly sacrificed the interests of their country to the interests of their class. For the repugnance

¹ Zosimus, *Hist.* v. 41. This was on the first occasion when Rome was menaced by Alaric.

² See Merviale's *Conversion of the Northern Nations*, pp. 207-210.

³ See Sismondi, *Hist. de la Chute de l'Empire romain*, tome 1. p. 230.

⁴ Eunapius. There is no other authority for the story of the treachery, which is not believed by Gibbon.

⁵ Sismondi, *Hist. de la Chute de l'Empire romain*, tome i. pp. 52-54; Milman, *Hist. of Latin Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 213. The Monophysites were greatly afflicted because, after the conquest, the Mohammedans tolerated the orthodox believers as well as themselves, and were unable to appreciate the distinction between them. In Gaul, the orthodox clergy favoured the invasions of the Franks, who, alone of the barbarian conquerors of Gaul, were Catholics, and St. Aprunculus was obliged to fly, the Burgundians desiring to kill him on account of his suspected connivance with the invaders (Greg. Tur. ii. 23.)

⁶ Dear Milman says of the Church, "if treacherous to the interests of the Roman Empire, it was true to those of mankind" (*Hist. of Christianity*, vol. iii. p. 48.) So Gibbon: "If the decline of the Roman Empire was hastened by the conversion of Constantine, the victorious religion broke the violence of the fall and modified the ferocious temper of the conquerors" (Ch. xxxviii.)

between the theological and the patriotic spirit, three reasons may, I think, be assigned. The first is that tendency of strong religious feeling to divert the mind from all terrestrial cares and passions, of which the ascetic life was the extreme expression, but which has always, under different forms, been manifested in the Church. The second arises from the fact that each form of theological opinion embodies itself in a visible and organised church, with a government, interest, and policy of its own, and a frontier often intersecting rather than following national boundaries; and these churches attract to themselves the attachment and devotion that would naturally be bestowed upon the country and its rulers. The third reason is, that the saintly and the heroic characters, which represent the ideals of religion and of patriotism, are generically different; for although they have no doubt many common elements of virtue, the distinctive excellence of each is derived from a proportion or disposition of qualities altogether different from that of the other.*

Before dismissing this very important revolution in moral history, I may add two remarks. In the first place, we may observe that the relation of the two great schools of morals to active and political life has been completely changed. Among the ancients, the Stoics, who regarded virtue and vice as generically different from all other things, participated actively in public life, and made this participation one of the first of duties; while the Epicureans, who resolved virtue into utility, and esteemed happiness its supreme motive, abstained from public life, and taught their disciples to neglect it. Asceticism followed the Stoical school in teaching that virtue and happiness are generically different things; but it was at the same time eminently unfavourable to civic virtue. On the other hand, that

great industrial movement which has arisen since the abolition of slavery, and which has always been essentially utilitarian in its spirit, has been one of the most active and influential elements of political progress. This change, though, as far as I know, entirely unnoticed by historians, constitutes, I believe, one of the great landmarks of moral history.

The second observation I would make relates to the estimate we form of the value of patriotic actions. However much historians may desire to extend their researches to the private and domestic virtues of a people, civic virtues are always those which must appear most prominently in their pages. History is concerned only with large bodies of men. The systems of philosophy or religion which produce splendid results on the great theatre of public life are fully and easily appreciated, and readers and writers are both liable to give them very undue advantages over those systems which do not favour civic virtues, but exercise their beneficial influence in the more obscure fields of individual self-culture, domestic morals, or private charity. If valued by the self-sacrifice they imply, or by their effects upon human happiness, these last rank very high, but they scarcely appear in history, and they therefore seldom obtain their due weight in historical comparisons. Christianity has, I think, suffered peculiarly from this cause. Its moral action has always been much more powerful upon individuals than upon societies, and the spheres in which its superiority over other religions is most incontestable are precisely those which history is least capable of realising.

In attempting to estimate the moral condition of the Roman and Byzantine Empires during the Christian period, and before the old civilisation had been dissolved by the barbarian or Mohammedan invasions, we must continually bear this last consideration in mind. We must remember, too, that Christianity had acquired an ascendancy among nations which were already deeply tainted by the inveterate vices of a corrupt and decaying civilisation, and also that many of the censors from whose pages we are obliged to form our estimate of the age were men who judged human frailties with all the fastidiousness of ascetics, and who expressed their judgments with all the declamatory exaggeration of the pulpit. Modern critics will probably not lay much

* Observe with what a fine perception St. Augustine notices the essentially unchristian character of the moral dispositions to which the greatness of Rome was due. He quotes the sentence of Sallust: "*Civitas, incredibile memoratu est, adeptâ libertate quantum brevi creverit, tanta cupido gloriæ incescerat*"; and adds: "*Ista ergo laudis aviditas et cupido gloriæ multa illa miranda fecit, laudabilia scilicet atque gloriosa secundum hominum existimationem. causa honoris, laudis et gloriæ consuluerunt patriæ, in qua ipsam gloriam requirebant, salutemque ejus salutis suæ præponere non dubitaverunt, pro isto uno vitio, id est, amore laudis, pecuniæ cupiditatem et multa alia vitia comprimentes.... Quid aliud amarent quam gloriam, qua volebant etiam post mortem tanquam vivere in ore laudantium?*" (*De Civ. Dei*, v. 12-13.)

stress upon the relapse of the Christians into the ordinary dress and usages of the luxurious society about them, upon the ridicule thrown by Christians on those who still adhered to the primitive austerity of the sect, or upon the fact that multitudes who were once mere nominal pagans had become mere nominal Christians. We find, too, a frequent disposition on the part of moralists to single out some new form of luxury, or some trivial custom which they regarded as indecorous, for the most extravagant denunciation, and to magnify its importance in a manner which in a later age it is difficult even to understand. Examples of this kind may be found both in pagan and in Christian writings, and they form an extremely curious page in the history of morals. Thus Juvenal exhausts his vocabulary of invective in denouncing the atrocious criminality of a certain noble, who in the very year of his consulship did not hesitate—not, it is true, by day, but at least in the sight of the moon and of the stars—with his own hand to drive his own chariot along the public road.² Seneca was scarcely less scandalised by the atrocious and, as he thought, unnatural luxury of those who had adopted the custom of cooling different beverages by mixing them with snow.³ Pliny assures us that the most monstrous of all criminals was the man who first devised the luxurious custom of wearing golden rings.⁴ Apuleius was compelled to defend himself for having eulogised tooth-powder, and he did so, among other ways, by arguing that nature has justified this form of propriety, for crocodiles were known periodically to leave the waters of the Nile, and to lie with open jaws upon the banks, while a certain bird proceeds with its beak to clean their teeth.⁵ If we were to measure the criminality of different customs by the vehemence of the patristic denunciations, we might almost conclude that the

most atrocious offence of their day was the custom of wearing false hair, or dyeing natural hair. Clement of Alexandria questioned whether the validity of certain ecclesiastical ceremonies might not be affected by wigs; for, he asked, when the priest is placing his hand on the head of the person who kneels before him, if that hand is resting upon false hair, who is it he is really blessing? Tertullian shuddered at the thought that Christians might have the hair of those who were in hell, upon their heads, and he found in the tiers of false hair that were in use a distinct rebellion against the assertion that no one can add to his stature, and, in the custom of dyeing the hair, a contravention of the declaration that man cannot make one hair white or black. Centuries rolled away. The Roman Empire tottered to its fall, and floods of vice and sorrow overspread the world; but still the denunciations of the Fathers were unabated. St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, and St. Gregory Nazianzen continued with uncompromising vehemence the war against false hair which Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria had begun.⁶

But although the vehemence of the Fathers on such trivial matters might appear at first sight to imply the existence of a society in which grave corruption was rare, such a conclusion would be totally untrue. After every legitimate allowance has been made, the pictures of Roman society by Ammianus Marcellinus, of the society of Marseilles by Salvian, of the society of Asia Minor and of Constantinople by Chrysostom, as well as the whole tenour of the history, and innumerable incidental notices in the writers, of the time, exhibit a condition of depravity, and especially of degradation, which has seldom been surpassed.⁷ The corruption had reached classes and institutions that appeared the most holy. The agapæ, or love feasts, which formed one of the most touching symbols of Christian unity, had become scenes of drunkenness and of riot. Denounced by the Fathers, condemned by the Council of Laodicea in

² "Præter majorum cineres atque ossa, volucris Carpentio rapitur pinguis Damasippus et ipse, Ipse rotam stringit multo sufflamine consul; Nocte quidem; sed luna videt, sed sidera testes Intendunt oculos Finitum tempus honoris Quum fuerit, clara Damasippus luce flagellum Sumet."—Juvenal, *Sat.* viii. 146.

³ *Nat. Quæst.* iv. 13. *Ep.* 78.

⁴ "Pessimum vitæ scelus fecit, quid id [aurum] primus induit digitis. . . quisquis primus instituit cunctanter id fecit, lævisque manibus, latentibusque induit." (Plin. *Hist. Nat.* xxxiii. 4.)

⁵ See a curious passage in his *Apologia*. It should be said that we have only his own account of the charges brought against him.

⁶ The history of false hair has been written with much learning by M. Guerle in his *Éloge des Perruques*.

⁷ The fullest view of this age is given in a very learned little work by Peter Erasmus Müller (1799), *De Genio Aevi Theodosiani*. Montfaucon has also devoted two essays to the moral condition of the Eastern world, one of which is given in Jortin's *Remarks on Ecclesiastical History*.

the fourth century, and afterwards by the Council of Carthage, they lingered as a scandal and an offence till they were finally suppressed by the Council of Trullo at the end of the seventh century.¹ The commemoration of the martyrs soon degenerated into scandalous dissipation. Fairs were held on the occasion, gross breaches of chastity were frequent, and the annual festival was suppressed on account of the immorality it produced.² The ambiguous position of the clergy with reference to marriage already led to grave disorder. In the time of St. Cyprian, before the outbreak of the Decian persecution, it had been common to find clergy professing celibacy, but keeping, under various pretexts, their mistresses in their houses;³ and, after Constantine, the complaints on this subject became loud and general.⁴ Virgins and monks often lived together in the same house, professing sometimes to share in chastity the same bed.⁵ Rich widows were surrounded by swarms of clerical sycophants, who addressed them in tender diminutives, studied and consulted their every fable, and, under the guise of piety, lay in wait for their gifts or bequests.⁶ The evil attained such a

point that a law was made under Valentinian depriving the Christian priests and monks of that power of receiving legacies which was possessed by every other class of the community; and St. Jerome has mournfully acknowledged that the prohibition was necessary.⁷ Great multitudes entered the Church to avoid municipal offices; the deserts were crowded with men whose sole object was to escape from honest labour, and even soldiers used to desert their colours for the monasteries.⁸ Noble ladies, pretending a desire to lead a higher life, abandoned their husbands to live with low-born lovers.⁹ Palestine, which was soon crowded with pilgrims, had become, in the time of St. Gregory of Nyssa, a hot-bed of debauchery.¹⁰ The evil reputation of pilgrimages long continued; and in the eighth century we find St. Boniface writing to the Archbishop of Canterbury imploring the bishops to take some measures to restrain or regulate the pilgrimages of their fellow-countrywomen; for there were few towns in central Europe, on the way to Rome, where English ladies, who started as pilgrims, were not living in open prostitution.¹¹ The luxury and ambition of the higher prelates, and the passion for amusements of the inferior priests,¹² were bitterly acknowledged. St. Jerome complained that the banquets of many bishops eclipsed in splendour those of the provincial governors, and the intrigues by

¹ See on these abuses Mosheim, *Eccles. Hist.* (Soame's ed.), vol. i. p. 463, Cave's *Primitive Christianity*, part i. ch. xi.

² Cave's *Primitive Christianity*, part i. ch. vii.

³ *Ep. lii.*

⁴ Evagrius describes with much admiration how certain monks of Palestine, by "a life wholly excellent and divine," had so overcome their passions that they were accustomed to bathe with women, for "neither sight nor touch, nor a woman's embrace, could make them relapse into their natural condition. Among men they desired to be men, and among women, women." (*H. E. i. 21*)

⁵ These "mulieres subintroductæ," as they were called, are continually noticed by Cyprian, Jerome, and Chrysostom. See Müller, *De Genio Aevi Theodorici*, and also the *Codex Theod.* xvi. tit. ii. lex 44, with the Comments. Dr. Todd, in his learned *Life of St. Patrick* (p. 91), quotes (I shall not venture to do so) from the *Lives of the Irish Saints* an extremely curious legend of a kind of contest of sanctity between St. Scuthnus and St. Brendan, in which it was clearly proved that the former had mastered his passions more completely than the latter. An enthusiast named Robert d'Arbrisseles is said in the twelfth century to have revived the custom (Jortin's *Remarks*, A. D. 1106).

⁶ St. Jerome gives (*Ep. lii.*) an extremely curious picture of these clerical flatterers, and several examples of the terms of endearment they were accustomed to employ. The tone of flattery which St. Jerome himself, though doubtless with the purest motives, employs in his copious correspondence with his female admirers, as to a modern layman peculiarly repulsive, and sometimes verges upon blasphemy. In his letter to Eustochium, whose daughter as a nun had become the "bride of Christ," he calls the mother "Socrus Dei," the mother-in-law of God. See, too, the extravagant flatteries of Chrysostom in his correspondence with Olympias.

⁷ "Pudet dicere sacerdotes idolorum, mimi et aurigæ et scorta hæreditates capunt; solis clericis et monachis hoc lege prohibetur, et prohibetur non a persecutoribus, sed a principibus Christianis. Nec de lege conqueror sed doleo cur meruerimus hanc legem." (*Ep. iii.*)

⁸ See Milman's *Hist. of Early Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 314.

⁹ This was one cause of the disputes between St. Gregory the Great and the Emperor Eustace. St. Chrysostom frequently notices the opposition of the military and the monastic spirits.

¹⁰ Hieron. *Ep. cxxviii.*

¹¹ St. Greg. Nyss. *Ad eund. Hieron.* Some Catholic writers have attempted to throw doubt upon the genuineness of this epistle but, Dean Milman thinks, with no sufficient reason. Its account of Jerusalem is to some extent corroborated by St. Jerome. (*Ad Paulinum*, *Ep. xxix.*)

¹² "Præterea non taceo charitati vestræ, quia omnibus servis Dei qui hic vel in Scriptura vel in timore Dei probatissimi esse videntur, displicet quod bonum et honestas et pudicitia vestræ ecclesiæ illuditur; et aliquid levamentum turpitudinis esset, si prohiberet synodus et principes vestri mulieribus et velatis feminis illud iter et frequentiam, quam ad Romanam civitatem veniendo et redeundo faciunt, quia magna ex parte pereunt, paucis remeantibus integris. Perpaucæ enim sunt civitates in Longobardia vel in Francia aut in Gallia in qua non sit adultera vel meretrix generis Anglorum, quod scandalum est et turpitudi totius ecclesiæ vestræ." (A. D. 745; *Ep. lxxii.*)

¹³ See Milman's *Latin Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 8.

which they obtained offices, and the fierce partisanship of their supporters, appear in every page of ecclesiastical history.

In the lay world, perhaps the chief characteristic was extreme childishness. The moral enthusiasm was greater than it had been in most periods of paganism, but, being drawn away to the desert, it had little influence upon society. The simple fact that the quarrels between the factions of the chariot races for a long period eclipsed all political, intellectual, and even religious differences, filled the streets again and again with bloodshed, and more than once determined great revolutions in the State, is sufficient to show the extent of the decadence. Patriotism and courage had almost disappeared, and, notwithstanding the rise of a Belisarius or a Narses, the level of public men was extremely depressed. The luxury of the Court, the servility of the courtiers, and the prevailing splendour of dress and of ornament, had attained an extravagant height. The world grew accustomed to a dangerous alternation of extreme asceticism and gross vice, and sometimes, as in the case of Antioch,¹ the most vicious and luxurious cities produced the most numerous anchorites. There existed a combination of vice and superstition which is eminently prejudicial to the nobility, though not equally detrimental to the happiness, of man. Public opinion was so low that very many forms of vice attracted little condemnation and punishment, while undoubting belief in the absolving efficacy of superstitious rites calmed the imagination and allayed the terrors of conscience. There was more falsehood and treachery than under the Cæsars, but there was much less cruelty, violence, and shamelessness. There was also less public spirit, less independence of character, less intellectual freedom.

In some respects, however, Christianity had already effected a great improvement. The gladiatorial games had disappeared from the West, and had not been introduced into Constantinople. The vast schools of prostitution which had grown up under the name of temples of Venus were suppressed. Religion, however deformed and debased, was at least no longer a seedplot of depravity, and under the influence of Christianity the effrontery

of vice had in a great measure disappeared. The gross and extravagant indecency of representation, of which we have still examples in the paintings on the walls, and the signs on many of the portals of Pompeii; the banquets of rich patricians, served by naked girls; the hideous excesses of unnatural lust, in which some of the pagan emperors had indulged with so much publicity, were no longer tolerated. Although sensuality was very general, it was less obtrusive, and unnatural and eccentric forms had become rare. The presence of a great Church, which, amid much superstition and fanaticism, still taught a pure morality and enforced it by the strongest motives, was everywhere felt—controlling, strengthening, or overawing. The ecclesiastics were a great body in the State. The cause of virtue was strongly organised; it drew to itself the best men, determined the course of vacillating but amiable natures, and placed some restraint upon the vicious. A bad man might be insensible to the moral beauties of religion, but he was still haunted by the recollection of its threatenings. If he emancipated himself from its influence in health and prosperity, its power returned in periods of sickness or danger, or on the eve of the commission of some great crime. If he had nerved himself against all its terrors, he was at least checked and governed at every turn by the public opinion which it had created. That total absence of all restraint, all decency, and all fear and remorse, which had been evinced by some of the monsters of crime who occupied the pagan throne, and which proves most strikingly the decay of the pagan religion, was no longer possible. The virtue of the best pagans was perhaps of as high an order as that of the best Christians, though it was of a somewhat different type; but the vice of the worst pagans certainly far exceeded that of the worst Christians. The pulpit had become a powerful centre of attraction, and charities of many kinds were actively developed.

The moral effects of the first great outburst of asceticism, so far as we have yet traced them, appear almost unmingled evils. In addition to the essentially distorted ideal of perfection it produced, the simple withdrawal from active life of that moral enthusiasm which is the leaven of society, was extremely pernicious, and there can be little doubt that

¹ Tillemont, *Hist. Eccl.* tome xi. p. 547.

to this cause we must in a great degree attribute the conspicuous failure of the Church, for some centuries, to effect any more considerable amelioration in the moral condition of Europe. There were, however, some distinctive excellences springing even from the first phase of asceticism, which, although they do not, as I conceive, suffice to counterbalance these evils, may justly qualify our censure.

The first condition of all really great moral excellence is a spirit of genuine self-sacrifice and self-renunciation. The habits of compromise, moderation, reciprocal self-restraint, gentleness, courtesy, and refinement, which are appropriate to luxurious or utilitarian civilisations, are very favourable to the development of many secondary virtues; but there is in human nature a capacity for a higher and more heroic reach of excellence, which demands very different spheres for its display, accustoms men to far nobler aims, and exercises a far greater attractive influence upon mankind. Imperfect and distorted as was the ideal of the anchorite; deeply, too, as it was perverted by the admixture of a spiritual selfishness, still the example of many thousands who, in obedience to what they believed to be right, voluntarily gave up everything that men hold dear, cast to the winds every compromise with enjoyment, and made extreme self-abnegation the very principle of their lives, was not wholly lost upon the world. At a time when increasing riches had profoundly tainted the Church, they taught men "to love labour more than rest, and ignominy more than glory, and to give more than to receive."¹ At a time when the passion for ecclesiastical dignities had become the scandal of the Empire they systematically abstained from them, teaching, in their quaint but energetic language, that "there are two classes a monk should especially avoid—bishops and women."² The very eccentricities of their lives, their uncouth forms, their horrible penances, won the admiration of rude men, and the superstitious reverence thus excited gradually passed to the charity and the self-denial which formed the higher elements of the monastic character. Multitudes of barbarians were converted to Christianity at

the sight of St. Simeon Stylites. The hermit, too, was speedily idealised by the popular imagination. The more repulsive features of his life and appearance were forgotten. He was thought of only as an old man with long white beard and gentle aspect, weaving his mats beneath the palm trees, while dæmons vainly tried to distract him by their stratagems, and the wild beasts grew tame in his presence, and every disease and every sorrow vanished at his word. The imagination of Christendom, fascinated by this ideal, made it the centre of countless legends, usually very childish, and occasionally, as we have seen, worse than childish, yet full of beautiful touches of human nature, and often conveying admirable moral lessons.³ Nursery tales, which first determine the course of the infant imagination, play no inconsiderable part in the history of humanity. In the fable of Psyche—that bright tale of passionate love with which the Greek mother lulled her child to rest—pagan antiquity has bequeathed us a single specimen of transcendent beauty, and the lives of the saints of the desert often exhibit an imagination different indeed in kind, but scarcely less brilliant in its display. St. Antony, we are told, was thinking one night that he was the best man in the desert, when it was revealed to him that there was another hermit far holier than himself. In the morning he started across the desert to visit this unknown saint. He met, first of all, a centaur, and afterwards a little man with horns and goat's feet, who said that he was a faun; and, these having pointed out the way, he arrived at last at his destination. St. Paul the Hermit, at whose cell he stopped, was one hundred and thirteen years old, and, having been living for a very long period in absolute solitude, he at first refused to admit the visitor, but at last consented, embraced him, and began, with a very pardonable curiosity, to question him minutely about the world he had

¹ We also find now and then, though I think very rarely, intellectual flashes of some brilliancy. Two of them strike me as especially noteworthy. St. Arsenius refused to separate young criminals from communion, though he had no hesitation about old men; for he had observed that young men speedily get accustomed and indifferent to the state of excommunication, while old men feel continually and acutely the separation. (Socrates, iv. 23.) St. Apollonius explained the Egyptian idolatry with the most intelligent rationalism. The ox, he thought, was in the first instance worshipped for its domestic uses; the Nile, because it was the chief cause of the fertility of the soil, etc. (Rufinus, *Hist. Mon.* cap. vii.)

² This was enjoined in the rule of St. Paphnutius. See Tillemont, tome x. p. 45.

³ "Omnimodis monachum fugere debere mulieres et episcopos." (Cassian, *De Canob. Inst.* xi. 17.)

left; "whether there was much new building in the towns, what empire ruled the world, whether there were any idolaters remaining?" The colloquy was interrupted by a crow, which came with a loaf of bread; and St. Paul, observing that during the last sixty years his daily allowance had been only half a loaf, declared that this was a proof that he had done right in admitting Antony. The hermits returned thanks, and sat down together by the margin of a glassy stream. But now a difficulty arose. Neither could bring himself to break the loaf before the other. St. Paul alleged that St. Antony, being his guest, should take the precedence; but St. Antony, who was only ninety years old, dwelt upon the greater age of St. Paul. So scrupulously polite were these old men that they passed the entire afternoon disputing on this weighty question, till at last, when the evening was drawing in, a happy thought struck them, and, each holding one end of the loaf, they pulled together. To abridge the story, St. Paul soon died, and his companion, being a weak old man, was unable to bury him, when two lions came from the desert and dug the grave with their paws, deposited the body in it, raised a loud howl of lamentation, and then knelt down submissively before St. Antony to beg a blessing. The authority for this history is no less a person than St. Jerome, who relates it as literally true, and intersperses his narrative with severe reflections on all who might question his accuracy.

The historian Palladius assures us that he heard from the lips of St. Macarius of Alexandria an account of a pilgrimage which that saint had made, under the impulse of curiosity, to visit the enchanted garden of Jannes and Jambres, tenanted by dæmons. For nine days Macarius traversed the desert, directing his course by the stars, and from time to time fixing reeds in the ground as landmarks for his return; but this precaution proved useless, for the devils tore up the reeds, and placed them during the night by the head of the sleeping saint. As he drew near the garden seventy dæmons of various forms came forth to meet him, and reproached him for disturbing them in their home. St. Macarius promised simply to walk round and inspect the wonders of the garden, and then depart without doing it any injury. He fulfilled his promise, and a journey of twenty days

brought him again to his cell.² Other legends are, however, of a less fantastic nature; and many of them display, though sometimes in very whimsical forms, a spirit of courtesy which seems to foreshadow the later chivalry, and some of them contain striking protests against the very superstitions that were most prevalent. When St. Macarius was sick a bunch of grapes was once given to him; but his charity impelled him to give them to another hermit, who in his turn refused to keep them; and at last, having made the circuit of the entire desert, they were returned to the saint.³ The same saint, whose usual beverage was putrid water, never failed to drink wine when set before him by the hermits he visited, atoning privately for this relaxation, which he thought the laws of courtesy required, by abstaining from water for as many days as he had drunk glasses of wine.⁴ One of his disciples, once meeting an idolatrous priest running in great haste across the desert with a huge stick in his hand, cried out in a loud voice, "Where are you going, dæmon?" The priest, naturally indignant, beat the Christian severely, and was proceeding on his way when he met St. Macarius, who accosted him so courteously and so tenderly that the pagan's heart was touched, he became a convert, and his first act of charity was to tend the Christian whom he had beaten.⁵ St. Avitus being on a visit to St. Marcian, this latter saint placed before him some bread, which Avitus refused to eat, saying that it was never his custom to touch food till after sunset. St. Marcian, professing his own inability to defer his repast, implored his guest for once to break this custom, and being refused exclaimed, "Alas! I am filled with anguish that you have come here to see a wise man and a saint, and you see only a glutton." St. Avitus was grieved and said "he would rather even eat flesh than hear such words," and he sat down as desired. St. Marcian then confessed that his own custom was the same as that of his brother saint; "but," he added, "we know that charity is better than fasting; for charity is enjoined by the Divine law, but fasting is left in our own power and will."⁵ St.

² Palladius, *Hist. Laus* cap. xix.

³ Rufinus, *Hist. Monach.* cap. xxix.

⁴ Tillemont, *Hist. Eccl.* tome viii. pp. 583, 584.

⁵ *Ibid* p. 589.

⁶ Theodoret, *Philoth.* cap. iii.

Epiphanius, having invited St. Hilarius to his cell, placed before him a dish of fowl. "Pardon me, father," said St. Hilarius, "but since I have become a monk I have never eaten flesh." "And I," said St. Epiphanius "since I have become a monk, have never suffered the sun to go down upon my wrath." "Your rule," rejoined the other, "is more excellent than mine." While a rich lady was courteously fulfilling the duties of hospitality to a monk, her child, whom she had for this purpose left, fell into a well. It lay unharmed upon the surface of the water, and afterwards told its mother that it had seen the arms of the saint sustaining it below.¹ At a time when it was the custom to look upon the marriage state with profound contempt, it was revealed to St. Macarius of Egypt that two married women in a neighbouring city were more holy than he was. The saint immediately visited them, and asked their mode of life, but they utterly repudiated the notion of their sanctity. "Holy father," they said, "suffer us to tell you frankly the truth. Even this very night we did not shrink from sleeping with our husbands; and what good works, then, can you expect from us?" The saint, however, persisted in his inquiries, and they then told him their stories. "We are," they said, "in no way related, but we married two brothers. We have lived together for fifteen years, without one licentious or angry word. We have entreated our husbands to let us leave them, to join the societies of holy virgins; but they refused to permit us, and we then promised before Heaven that no worldly word should sully our lips." "Of a truth," cried St. Macarius, "I see that God regards not whether one is virgin or married, whether one is in a monastery or in the world. He considers only the disposition of the heart, and gives the Spirit to all who desire to serve Him, whatever their condition may be."²

I have multiplied these illustrations to an extent that must, I fear, have already somewhat taxed the patience of my readers; but the fact that, during a long period of history, these saintly legends formed the ideals guiding the imagination and forming the moral sentiment of the Christian world gives them an

importance far beyond their intrinsic value. Before dismissing the saints of the desert, there is one other class of legends to which I desire to advert. I mean those which describe the connection between saints and the animal world. These legends are, I think, worthy of special notice in moral history, as representing the first, and, at the same time, one of the most striking efforts ever made in Christendom to inculcate a feeling of kindness and pity towards the brute creation. In pagan antiquity considerable steps had been made to raise this form of humanity to a recognised branch of ethics. The way had been prepared by numerous anecdotes, growing for the most part out of simple ignorance of natural history, which all tended to diminish the chasm between men and animals, by representing the latter as possessing to a very high degree both moral and rational qualities. Elephants, it was believed, were endowed, not only with reason and benevolence, but also with reverential feelings. They worshipped the sun and moon, and in the forests of Mauritania they were accustomed to assemble every new moon, at a certain river, to perform religious rites.³ The hippopotamus taught men the medicinal value of bleeding, being accustomed, when affected by plethory, to bleed itself with a thorn, and afterwards close the wound with slime.⁴ Pelicans committed suicide to feed their young; and bees, when they had broken the laws of their sovereign.⁵ A temple was erected at Sestos to commemorate the affection of an eagle which loved a young girl, and upon her death cast itself in despair into the flames by which her body was consumed.⁶ Numerous anecdotes are related of faithful dogs which refused to survive their masters, and one of these had, it was said, been transformed into the Dog-star.⁷ The dolphin, especially, became the subject of many beautiful legends, and its affection for its young, for music, and above all for little children, excited the admiration, not only of the populace, but of the most distin-

¹ Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* vii. 1. Many anecdotes of elephants are collected viii. 1-12. See, too, Dion Cassius, xxix. 38.

² Pliny, viii. 40.

³ Donne's *Biathanatos*, p. 22. This habit of bees is mentioned by St. Ambrose. The peccan, as is well known, afterwards became an emblem of Christ.

⁴ Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* x. 6.

⁵ A long list of legends about dogs is given by Legendre, in the very curious chapter on animals in his *Traité de l'Opinion*, tome 1. pp. 308-327.

¹ *Verba Seniorum*.

² Theodoret, *Philoth.* cap. ii.

³ Tillemont, tome viii. pp. 594, 595.

guished naturalists.¹ Many philosophers ascribed to animals a rational soul, like that of man. According to the Pythagoreans, human souls transmigrate after death into animals. According to the Stoics and others, the souls of men and animals were alike parts of the all-permeating Divine Spirit that animates the world.²

We may even find traces from an early period of a certain measure of legislative protection for animals. By a very natural process the ox, as a principal agent in agriculture, and therefore a kind of symbol of civilisation, was in many different countries regarded with a peculiar reverence. The sanctity attached to it in Egypt is well known. That tenderness to animals, which is one of the most beautiful features in the Old Testament writings, shows itself, among other ways, in the command not to muzzle the ox that treads out the corn, or to yoke together the ox and the ass.³ Among the early Romans the same feeling was carried so far that for a long time it was actually a capital offence to slaughter an ox, that animal being pronounced, in a special sense, the fellow-labourer of man.⁴ A similar law is said to have in early times existed in Greece.⁵ The beautiful passage in which the Psalmist describes how the sparrow could find a shelter and a home in the altar of the temple, was as applicable to Greece as to Jerusalem. The sentiment of Xenocrates, who, when a bird pursued by a hawk took refuge in his breast, caressed and finally released it, saying to his disciples that a good man should never give up a suppliant,⁶ was believed to be shared by

the gods, and it was regarded as an act of impiety to disturb the birds who had built their nests beneath the porticoes of the temple.¹ A case is related of a child who was even put to death on account of an act of aggravated cruelty to birds.²

The general tendency of nations, as they advance from a rude and warlike to a refined and peaceful condition, from the stage in which the realising powers are faint and dull to that in which they are sensitive and vivid, is undoubtedly to become more gentle and humane in their actions; but this, like all other general tendencies in history, may be counteracted or modified by many special circumstances. The law I have mentioned about oxen was obviously one of those that belong to a very early stage of progress, when legislators are labouring to form agricultural habits among a warlike and nomadic people.³ The games in which the slaughter of animals bore so large a part, having been introduced but a little before the extinction of the Republic, did very much to arrest or retard the natural progress of humane sentiments. In ancient Greece, besides the bull-fights of Thessaly, the combats of quails and cocks⁴ were favourite amusements, and

¹ There is a story told by Herodotus (i. 137-139) of an ambassador who was sent by his fellow-countrymen to consult an oracle at Miletus about a suppliant who had taken refuge with the Cymæans and was demanded with menace by his enemies. The oracle, being bribed, enjoined the surrender. The ambassador, on leaving, with seeming carelessness disturbed the sparrows under the portico of the temple, when the voice from behind the altar denounced his impiety for disturbing the guests of the gods. The ambassador replied with an obvious and withering retort. Ælian says (*Hist. Var.*) that the Athenians condemned to death a boy for killing a sparrow that had taken refuge in the temple of Æsculapius.

² Quintilian, *Inst.* v. 9.

³ In the same way we find several chapters in the *Zendavesta* about the criminality of injuring dogs; which is explained by the great importance of shepherds' dogs to a pastoral people.

⁴ On the origin of Greek cock-fighting, see Ælian, *Hist. Var.* ii. 28. Many particulars about it are given by Athenæus. Chrysippus maintained that cock-fighting was the final cause of cocks, these birds being made by Providence in order to inspire us by the example of their courage. (Plutarch, *De Refug. Stoic.*) The Greeks do not, however, appear to have known "cock-throwing," the favourite English game of throwing a stick called a "cock-stick" at cocks. It was a very ancient and very popular amusement, and was practised especially on Shrove Tuesday, and by school-boys. Sir Thomas More had been famous for his skill in it. (Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes*, p. 283.) Three origins of it have been given—first, that in the Danish wars the Saxons failed to surprise a certain city by reason of the crowing of cocks, and had in consequence a great hatred of that bird; secondly, that the cocks (*galli*) were special representatives of Frenchmen, with whom the English were constantly at war; and, thirdly, that they were connected with the denial of St. Peter. As Sir Charles Sedley said.—

¹ Pliny tells some extremely pretty stories of this kind. (*Hist. Nat.* ix. 8-9.) See, too, Aulus Gellius, xvi. 19. The dolphin, on account of its love for its young, became a common symbol of Christ among the early Christians.

² A very full account of the opinions, both of ancient and modern philosophers, concerning the souls of animals, is given by Bayle, *Dict. arts.* "Pereira E," "Rorarius K."

³ The Jewish law did not confine its care to oxen. The reader will remember the touching provision, "Thou shalt not see the kid in his mother's milk" (Deut. xiv. 21), and the law forbidding men to take a parent bird that was sitting on its young or on its eggs. (Deut. xxi. 6, 7.)

⁴ "Cujus tanta fuit apud antiquos veneratio, ut tam capital esset bovem necuisse quam avem." (Columella, lib. vi. in proem.) "Hic socius hominum in rustico opere et Cereis ministris. Ab hoc antiqui manus ita abstinere voluerunt ut capite sanxerint si quis occideret." (Varro, *De Re Rustic.* lib. ii. cap. v.)

⁵ See Legendre, tome ii. p. 338. The sword with which the priest sacrificed the ox was afterwards pronounced accursed (Ælian, *Hist. Var.* lib. viii. cap. iii.)

⁶ Diog. Laert. *Xenocrates*.

were much encouraged by the legislators, as furnishing examples of valour to the soldiers. The colossal dimensions of the Roman games, the circumstances that favoured them, and the overwhelming interest they speedily excited, I have described in a former chapter. We have seen, however, that, notwithstanding the gladiatorial shows, the standard of humanity towards men was considerably raised during the Empire. It is also well worthy of notice that, notwithstanding the passion for the combats of wild beasts, Roman literature and the later literature of the nations subject to Rome abound in delicate touches displaying in a very high degree a sensitiveness to the feelings of the animal world. This tender interest in animal life is one of the most distinctive features of the poetry of Virgil. Lucretius, who rarely struck the chords of pathos, had at a still earlier period drawn a very beautiful picture of the sorrows of the bereaved cow whose calf had been sacrificed upon the altar.¹ Plutarch mentions incidentally that he could never bring himself to sell, in its old age, the ox which had served him faithfully in the time of its strength.² Ovid expressed a similar sentiment with an almost equal emphasis.³ Juvenal speaks of a Roman lady with her eyes filled with tears on account of the death of a sparrow.⁴ Apollonius of Tyana, on the ground of humanity, refused, even when invited by a king, to participate in the chase.⁵ Arrian, the friend of Epictetus, in his

"Mayst thou be punished for St. Peter's crime,
And on Sirove Tuesday perish in thy prime."

—*Knight's Old England*, vol. II. p. 126.

¹ *De Natura Rerum*, lib. II.

² *Life of Marc. Cato*.

³ "Quid meruere boves, animal sine fraude dolisque,
Innocuum, simplex, natum tolerare labores?
Immemor est demum nec frugum munere dignus.
Qui potuit curvi dempto moedo pondere aratri
Ruricolam suauiter mactare."

—*Metamorph.* xv. 120-124.

⁴ "Cujus

Turbavit nidos extinctus passer ocellos."

—*Juvenal, Sat.* vi. 7-8.

There is a little poem in Catullus (iu.) to console his mistress upon the death of her favourite sparrow; and Martial more than once alludes to the pets of the Roman ladies.

Compare the charming description of the Prioress, in Chaucer:—

"She was so charitable and so pitous,
She wolde wepe if that she saw a mous
Caught in a trappe, if it were ded or bledde.
Of smale houndes had she that she fedde
With rosted flesh and milke and wastel brede,
But sore wept she if one of them were dede,
Or if men smote it with a yerde smert:
And all was conscience and tendre herte."

—*Prologue to the "Canterbury Tales."*

⁵ *Philost. Apol.* I. 38.

book upon coursing, anticipated the beautiful picture which Addison has drawn of the huntsman refusing to sacrifice the life of the captured hare which had given him so much pleasure in its flight.⁶

These touches of feeling, slight as they may appear, indicate, I think, a vein of sentiment such as we should scarcely have expected to find co-existing with the gigantic slaughter of the amphitheatre. The progress, however, was not only one of sentiment—it was also shown in distinct and definite teaching. Pythagoras and Empedocles were quoted as the founders of this branch of ethics. The moral duty of kindness to animals was, in the first instance, based upon a dogmatic assertion of the transmigration of souls; and, the doctrine that animals are within the circle of human duty being thus laid down, subsidiary considerations of humanity were alleged. The rapid growth of the Pythagorean school in the latter days of the Empire made these considerations familiar to the people. Porphyry⁷ elaborately advocated, and even Seneca for a time practised, abstinence from flesh. But the most remarkable figure in this movement is unquestionably Plutarch. Casting aside the dogma of transmigration—or, at least, speaking of it only as a doubtful conjecture—he places the duty of kindness to animals on the broad ground of the affections; and he urges that duty with an emphasis and a detail to which no adequate parallel can, I believe, be found in the Christian writings for at least seventeen hundred years. He condemns absolutely the games of the amphitheatre, dwells with great force upon the effect of such spectacles in hardening the character, enumerates in detail and denounces with unqualified energy the refined cruelties which gastronomic fancies had produced, and asserts in the strongest language that every man has duties to the animal world as truly as to his fellow-men.⁸

⁶ See the curious chapter in his *Κυνηγετικός*, xvi., and compare it with No. 116 in the *Spectator*.

⁷ In his *De Abstinentia Carnis*. The controversy between Origen and Celsus furnishes us with a very curious illustration of the extravagances into which some pagans of the third century fell about animals. Celsus objected to the Christian doctrine about the position of men in the universe, that many of the animals were at least the equals of men, alike in reason, religious feeling, and knowledge. (*Orig. Cont. Cels.* lib. IV.)

⁸ These views are chiefly defended in his two tracts on eating flesh. Plutarch has also recurred to the subject, incidentally, in several other works, especially in a very beautiful passage in his *Life of Marcus Cato*.

If we now pass to the Christian Church, we shall find that little or no progress was at first made in this sphere. Among the Manicheans, it is true, the mixture of Oriental notions was shown in an absolute prohibition of animal food, and abstinence from this food was also frequently practised upon totally different grounds by the orthodox. One or two of the Fathers have also mentioned with approbation the humane counsels of the Pythagoreans.¹ But, on the other hand, the doctrine of transmigration was emphatically repudiated by the Catholics; the human race was isolated, by the scheme of redemption, more than ever from all other races; and in the range and circle of duties inculcated by the early Fathers those to animals had no place. This is, indeed, the one form of humanity which appears more prominently in the Old Testament than in the New. The many beautiful traces of it in the former, which indicate a sentiment² even where they do not very strictly define a duty, gave way before an ardent philanthropy which regarded human interests as the one end, and the relations of man to his Creator as the one question, of life, and dismissed somewhat contemptuously, as an idle sentimentalism, notions of duty to animals.³ A refined and subtle sympathy with animal feeling is, indeed, rarely found among those who are engaged very actively in the affairs of life; and it was not without a meaning or a reason that Shakespeare placed that exquisitely pathetic analysis of the sufferings of the wounded stag, which is, perhaps, its most perfect poetical expression, in the midst of the morbid dreamings of the diseased and melancholy Jaques.

But, while what are called the rights of animals had no place in the ethics of the Church, a feeling of sympathy with the

irrational creation was in some degree inculcated indirectly by the incidents of the hagiology. It was very natural that the hermit, living in the lonely deserts of the East or in the vast forests of Europe, should come into an intimate connection with the animal world; and it was no less natural that the popular imagination, when depicting the hermit life, should make this connection the centre of many picturesque—and sometimes touching—legends. The birds, it was said, stooped in their flight at the old man's call; the lion and the hyena crouched submissively at his feet; his heart, which was closed to all human interests, expanded freely at the sight of some suffering animal; and something of his own sanctity descended to the companions of his solitude and the objects of his miracles. The wild beasts attended St. Theon when he walked abroad, and the saint rewarded them by giving them drink out of his well. An Egyptian hermit had made a beautiful garden in the desert, and used to sit beneath the palm-trees while a lion ate fruit from his hand. When St. Poemen was shivering in a winter night a lion crouched beside him and became his covering. Lions buried St. Paul the Hermit and St. Mary of Egypt. They appear in the legends of St. Jerome, St. Gerasimus, St. John the Silent, St. Simeon, and many others. When an old and feeble monk, named Zosimas, was on his journey to Cæsarea, with an ass which bore his possessions, a lion seized and devoured the ass, but at the command of the saint the lion itself carried the burden to the city gates. St. Helenus called a wild ass from its herd to bear his burden through the wilderness. The same saint, as well as St. Pachomius, crossed the Nile on the back of a crocodile, as St. Scuthinus did the Irish Channel on a sea monster. Stags continually accompanied saints upon their journeys, bore their burdens, ploughed their fields, revealed their relics. The hunted stag was especially the theme of many picturesque legends. A pagan, named Branchion, was once pursuing an exhausted stag, when it took refuge in a cavern, whose threshold no inducement could persuade the hounds to cross. The astonished hunter entered and found himself in presence of an old hermit, who at once protected the fugitive and converted the pursuer. In the legends of St. Eustachius and St. Hubert, Christ is represented as

¹ See, for example, a striking passage in Clem. Alex. *Strom.* lib. ii. St. Clement imagines Pythagoras had borrowed his sentiments on this subject from Moses.

² There is, I believe, no record of any wild beast combats existing among the Jews, and the rabbinical writers have been remarkable for the great emphasis with which they inculcated the duty of kindness to animals. See some passages from them, cited in Wollaston, *Religion of Nature*, sec. ii., note. Maimonides believed in a future life for animals, to recompense them for their sufferings here. (Bayle, *Diet.* art. "Rorarius D.") There is a curious collection of the opinions of different writers on this last point in a little book called the *Rights of Animals*, by William Drummond (London, 1838), pp. 197-205.

³ Thus St. Paul (1 Cor. ix. 9) turned aside the precept, "Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn," from its natural meaning, with the contemptuous question, "Doth God take care for oxen?"

having assumed the form of a hunted stag, which turned upon its pursuer, with a crucifix glittering on its brow, and, addressing him with a human voice, converted him to Christianity. In the full frenzy of a chase hounds and stag stopped and knelt down together to venerate the relics of St. Fingar. On the festival of St. Regulus the wild stags assembled at the tomb of the saint, as the ravens used to do at that of St. Apollinar of Ravenna. St. Erasmus was the special protector of oxen, and they knelt down voluntarily before his shrine. St. Antony was the protector of hogs, who were usually introduced into his pictures. St. Bridget kept pigs, and a wild boar came from the forest to subject itself to her rule. A horse foreshadowed by its lamentations the death of St. Columba. The three companions of St. Colman were a cock, a mouse, and a fly. The cock announced the hour of devotion, the mouse bit the ear of the drowsy saint till he got up; and if in the course of his studies he was afflicted by any wandering thoughts, or called away to other business, the fly alighted on the line where he had left off and kept the place. Legends, not without a certain whimsical beauty, described the moral qualities existing in animals. A hermit was accustomed to share his supper with a wolf, which, one evening entering the cell before the return of the master, stole a loaf of bread. Struck with remorse, it was a week before it ventured again to visit the cell, and when it did so its head hung down and its whole demeanour manifested the most profound contrition. The hermit "stroked with a gentle hand its bowed-down head," and gave it a double portion as a token of forgiveness. A lioness knelt down with lamentations before another saint, and then led him to its cub, which was blind, but, which received its sight at the prayer of the saint. Next day the lioness returned, bearing the skin of a wild beast as a mark of its gratitude. Nearly the same thing happened to St. Macarius of Alexandria; a hyena knocked at his door, brought its young, which was blind, and which the saint restored to sight, and repaid the obligation soon afterwards by bringing a fleece of wool. "O hyena!" said the saint, "how did you obtain this fleece? You must have stolen and eaten a sheep." Full of shame, the hyena hung its head down, but persisted in offering

its gift, which, however, the holy man refused to receive till the hyena "had sworn" to cease for the future to rob. The hyena bowed its head in token of its acceptance of the oath, and St. Macarius afterwards gave the fleece to St. Melania. Other legends simply speak of the sympathy between saints and the irrational world. The birds came at the call of St. Cuthbert, and a dead bird was resuscitated by his prayer. When St. Aengus, in felling wood, had cut his hand the birds gathered round, and with loud cries lamented his misfortune. A little bird, struck down and mortally wounded by a hawk, fell at the feet of St. Kieranus, who shed tears as he looked upon its torn breast and offered up a prayer, upon which the bird was instantly healed.¹

Many hundreds—I should, perhaps, hardly exaggerate were I to say many thousands—of legends of this kind exist in the lives of the saints. Suggested, in the first instance, by that desert life which was at once the earliest phase of monachism and one of the earliest sources of Christian mythology, strengthened by the symbolism which represented different virtues and vices under the forms of animals, and by the reminiscences of the rites and the superstitions of paganism, the connection between men and animals became the keynote of an infinite variety of fantastic tales. In our eyes they may appear extravagantly puerile, yet it will scarcely, I hope, be necessary to apologise for introducing them into what purports to be a grave work when it is remembered that for many centuries they were universally accepted by mankind, and were so interwoven with all local traditions, and with all the associations of education, that they at once determined and reflected the inmost feelings of the heart. Their tendency to create a certain feeling of sympathy towards animals is manifest, and this is probably the utmost

¹ I have taken these illustrations from the collection of hermit literature in Rosweyde, from different volumes of the Bollandists, from the *Dialogues* of Sulpicius Severus, and from what is perhaps the most interesting of all collections of saintly legends, Colgan's *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae*. M. Alfred Maury, in his most valuable work, *Légendes pieuses du Moyen Âge*, has examined minutely the part played by animals in symbolising virtues and vices, and has shown the way in which the same incidents were repeated, with slight variations, in different legends. M. de Montalembert has devoted what is probably the most beautiful chapter of his *Moines d'Occident* ("Les Moines et la Nature") to the relations of monks to the animal world; but the numerous legends he cites are all, with one or two exceptions, different from those I have given.

the Catholic Church has done in that direction.¹ A very few authentic instances may, indeed, be cited of saints whose natural gentleness of disposition was displayed in kindness to the animal world. Of St. James of Venice—an obscure saint of the thirteenth century—it is told that he was accustomed to buy and release the birds with which Italian boys used to play by attaching them to strings, saying that "he pitied the little birds of the Lord," and that his "tender charity recoiled from all cruelty, even to the most diminutive of animals."² St. Francis of Assisi was a more conspicuous example of the same spirit. "If I could only be presented to the emperor," he used to say, "I would pray him, for the love of God and of me, to issue an edict prohibiting anyone from catching or imprisoning my sisters the larks, and ordering that all who have oxen or asses should at Christmas feed them particularly well." A crowd of legends turning upon this theme were related of him. A wolf near Gubbio, being adjured by him, promised to abstain from eating sheep, placed its paw in the hand of the saint to ratify the promise, and was afterwards fed from house to house by the inhabitants of the city. A crowd of birds on another occasion came to hear the saint preach, as fish did to hear St. Antony of Padua. A falcon awoke him at his hour of prayer. A grasshopper encouraged him by her melody to sing praises to God. The noisy swallows kept silence when he began to teach.³

On the whole, however, Catholicism has done very little to inculcate humanity to animals. The fatal vice of theologians, who have always looked upon others solely through the medium of their own special dogmatic views, has been an obstacle to all advance in this direction. The animal world, being altogether external to the scheme of redemption, was

regarded as beyond the range of duty, and the belief that we have any kind of obligation to its members has never been inculcated—has never, I believe, been even admitted—by Catholic theologians. In the popular legends, and in the recorded traits of individual amiability, it is curious to observe how constantly those who have sought to inculcate kindness to animals have done so by endeavouring to associate them with something distinctively Christian. The legends I have noticed glorified them as the companions of the saints. The stag was honoured as especially commissioned to reveal the relics of saints, and as the deadly enemy of the serpent. In the feast of asses that animal was led with veneration into the churches, and a rude hymn proclaimed its dignity, because it had borne Christ in his flight to Egypt and in his entry into Jerusalem. St. Francis always treated lambs with a peculiar tenderness, as being symbols of his Master. Luther grew sad and thoughtful at a hare hunt, for it seemed to him to represent the pursuit of souls by the devil. Many popular legends exist associating some bird or animal with some incident in the evangelical narrative, and securing for it in consequence an unmolested life. But such influences have never extended far. There are two distinct objects which may be considered by moralists in this sphere. They may regard the character of the men, or they may regard the sufferings of the animals. The amount of callousness or of conscious cruelty displayed or elicited by amusements or practices that inflict suffering on animals bears no kind of proportion to the intensity of that suffering. Could we follow with adequate realisation the pangs of the wounded birds that are struck down in our sports, or of the timid hare in the long course of its flight, we should probably conclude that they were not really less than those caused by the Spanish bull-fight or by the English pastimes of the last [eighteenth] century. But the excitement of the chase refracts the imagination, and, owing to the diminutive size of the victim and the undemonstrative character of its suffering, these sports do not exercise that prejudicial influence upon character which they would exercise if the sufferings of the animals were vividly realised, and were at the same time accepted as an element of the enjoyment. The class of amusements of which

¹ Chateaubriand speaks, however (*Études historiques, étude sixième, première partie*), of an old Gallic law, forbidding to throw a stone at an ox attached to the plough, or to make its yoke too tight.

² Bollandists, May 31. Leonardo da Vinci is said to have had the same fondness for buying and releasing caged birds, and (to go back a long way) Pythagoras to have purchased one day, near Metapontus, from some fishermen all the fish in their net, that he might have the pleasure of releasing them (*Apuleius, Apologia*).

³ See these legends collected by Hase (*St. Francis Assisi*). It is said of Cardinal Bellarmine that he used to allow vermin to bite him, saying, "We shall have heaven to reward us for our sufferings, but these poor creatures have nothing but the enjoyment of this present life." (*Bayle, Dict. philos. art. "Bellarmine"*)

the ancient combats of wild beasts form the type have, no doubt, nearly disappeared from Christendom, and it is possible that the softening power of Christian teaching may have had some indirect influence in abolishing them; but a candid judgment will confess that it has been very little. During the periods, and in the countries, in which theological influence was supreme they were unchallenged.¹ They disappeared² at last because a luxurious and industrial civilisation involved a refinement of manners; because a fastidious taste recoiled with a sensation of disgust from pleasures that an uncultivated taste would keenly relish; because the drama, at once reflecting and accelerating the change, gave a new form to popular amusements, and because in consequence of this revolution the old pastimes, being left to the dregs of society, became the occasions of scandalous disorders.³ In Protestant countries the clergy

have, on the whole, sustained this movement. In Catholic countries it has been much more faithfully represented by the school of Voltaire and Beccaria. A judicious moralist may, however, reasonably question whether amusements which derive their zest from a display of the natural ferocious instincts of animals, and which substitute death endured in the frenzy of combat for death in the remote slaughter-house or by the slow process of decay, have added in any appreciable degree to the sum of animal misery; and in these cases he will dwell less upon the suffering inflicted than upon the injurious influence the spectacle may sometimes exercise on the character of the spectator. But there are forms of cruelty which must be regarded in a different light. The horrors of vivisection, often so wantonly, so needlessly practised,⁴ the prolonged and atrocious tor-

¹ I have noticed, in my *History of Rationalism*, that, although some Popes did undoubtedly try to suppress Spanish bull-fights, this was solely on account of the destruction of human life they caused. Full details on this subject will be found in Concina, *De Spectaculis* (Romæ, 1752). Bayle says, "Il n'y a point de casuiste qui croie qu'on pêche en faisant combattre des taureaux contre des dogues," &c. (*Dict. philos.* "Rorarius, C.")

² On the ancient amusements of England the reader may consult Seymour's *Survey of London* (1734), vol. i. pp. 227-235; Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes of the English People*. Cock-fighting was a favourite children's amusement in England as early as the twelfth century. (Hampson's *Mémoires Historiques*, vol. 1 p. 160.) It was, with football and several other amusements, for a time suppressed by Edward III., on the ground that they were diverting the people from archery, which was necessary to the military greatness of England.

³ The decline of these amusements in England began with the great development of the theatre under Elizabeth. An order of the Privy Council in July, 1591, prohibits the exhibition of plays on Thursday, because on Thursdays bear-baiting and suchlike pastimes had been usually practised, and an injunction to the same effect was sent to the Lord Mayor, wherein it was stated that "in divers places the players do use to recite their plays, to the great hurt and destruction of the game of bear-baiting and like pastimes, which are maintained for Her Majesty's pleasure." (Nichols, *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. 1823, vol. i. p. 438.) The reader will remember the picture in *Kenilworth* of the Earl of Sussex petitioning Elizabeth against Shakespeare, on the ground of his plays distracting men from bear-baiting. Elizabeth (see Nichols) was extremely fond of bear-baiting. James I. especially delighted in cock-fighting, and in 1610 was present at a great fight between a lion and a bear. (Hone, *Every Day Book*, vol. i. pp. 255-259.) The theatres, however, rapidly multiplied, and a writer who lived about 1629 said "that no less than seventeen playhouses had been built in or about London within threescore years." (Seymour's *Survey*, vol. i. p. 229.) The Rebellion suppressed all public amusements, and when they were re-established after the Restoration, it was found that the tastes of the better classes no longer sympathised with the bear-garden. Pepys (*Diary*, August 14, 1666) speaks of bull-baiting as "a very rude and nasty pleasure," and says he had not been in the bear-garden for many years. Evelyn (*Diary*, June 16, 1670), having

been present at these shows, describes them as "butcherly sports, or rather barbarous cruelties," and says he had not visited them before for twenty years. A paper in the *Spectator* (No. 141, written in 1711) talks of those who "seek their diversion at the bear-garden,

where reason and good manners have no right to disturb them." In 1751, however, Lord Kames was able to say: "The bear-garden, which is one of the chief entertainments of the English, is held in abhorrence by the French and other polite nations." (*Essay on Morals*, 1st ed., p. 7; and he warmly defends, p. 30, the English taste.) During the latter half of the eighteenth century there was constant controversy on the subject (which may be traced in the pages of the *Annual Register*), and several forgotten clergymen published sermons upon it, and the frequent riots resulting from the fact that the bear-gardens had become the resort of the worst classes assisted the movement. The London magistrates took measures to suppress cock-fighting in 1769 (Hampson's *Mémoires*, vol. i. p. 160); but bull-baiting continued far into the present (nineteenth) century. Windham and Canning strongly defended it; Dr. Parr is said to have been fond of it (*Southey's Commonplace Book*, vol. iv. p. 585); and as late as 1824 Sir Robert (then Mr.) Peel argued strongly against its prohibition. (*Parliamentary Debates*, vol. x. pp. 132-133, 491-495.)

⁴ Bacon, in an account of the deficiencies of medicine, recommends vivisection in terms that seem to imply that it was not practised in his time: "As for the passages and pores, it is true, which was anciently noted, that the more subtle of them appear not in anatomies, because they are shut and latent in dead bodies, though they be open and manifest in live; which being supposed, though the inhumanity of *anatomia vivorum* was by Celsus justly reprov'd, yet, in regard of the great use of this observation, the inquiry needed not by him so slightly to have been relinquished altogether, or referred to the casual practices of surgery; but might have been well diverted upon the dissection of beasts alive, which, notwithstanding the dissimilitude of their parts, may sufficiently satisfy this inquiry." (*Advancement of Learning*, x. 4.) Harvey speaks of vivisections as having contributed to lead him to the discovery of the circulation of the blood. (Acland's *Harveian Oration*, 1865, p. 55.) Bayle, describing the treatment of animals by men, says: "Nous fouillons dans leurs entrailles pendant leur vie, afin de satisfaire notre curiosité." (*Dict. philos.* art. "Rorarius, C.") Public opinion in England was very strongly directed to the subject in the present [nineteenth] century by the

tures sometimes inflicted in order to procure some gastronomic delicacy, are so far removed from the public gaze that they exercise little influence on the character of men. Yet no humane man can reflect upon them without a shudder. To bring these things within the range of ethics, to create the notion of duties towards the animal world, has, so far as Christian countries are concerned, been one of the peculiar merits of the last century, and, for the most part, of Protestant nations. However fully we may recognise the humane spirit transmitted to the world in the form of legends from the saints of the desert, it must not be forgotten that the inculcation of humanity to animals on a wide scale is mainly the work of a recent and a secular age; that the Mohammedans and the Brahmins have in this sphere considerably surpassed the Christians; and that Spain and Southern Italy, in which Catholicism has most deeply implanted its roots, are even now, probably beyond all other countries in Europe, those in which inhumanity to animals is most wanton and most unrebuked.

The influence the first form of monachism has exercised upon the world, so far as it has been beneficial, has been chiefly through the imagination, which has been fascinated by its legends. In the great periods of theological controversy, the Eastern monks had furnished some leading theologians; but in general, in Oriental lands, the hermit life predominated, and extreme maceration was the chief merit of the saint. But in the West monachism assumed very different forms, and exercised far higher functions. At first the Oriental saints were the ideals of Western monks. The Eastern St. Athanasius had been the founder of Italian monachism. St. Martin of Tours excluded labour from the discipline of his monks, and he and they, like the Eastern saints, were accustomed to wander abroad, destroying the idols of the temples.¹ But three great causes conspired to direct the monastic spirit in the

West into practical channels. Conditions of race and climate have ever impelled the inhabitants of these lands to active life, and have at the same time rendered them constitutionally incapable of enduring the austerities or enjoying the hallucinations of the sedentary Oriental. There arose, too, in the sixth century a great legislator, whose form may be dimly traced through a cloud of fantastic legends, and the order of St. Benedict, with that of St. Columba and some others, founded on substantially the same principle, soon ramified through the greater part of Europe, tempered the wild excesses of useless penances, and, making labour an essential part of the monastic system, directed the movement to the purposes of general civilisation. In the last place, the barbarian invasions, and the dissolution of the Western Empire, dislocating the whole system of government and almost resolving society into its primitive elements, naturally threw upon the monastic corporations social, political, and intellectual functions of the deepest importance.

It has been observed that the capture of Rome by Alaric, involving as it did the destruction of the grandest religious monuments of paganism, in fact established in that city the supreme authority of Christianity.¹ A similar remark may be extended to the general downfall of the Western civilisation. In that civilisation Christianity had indeed been legally enthroned; but the philosophies and traditions of paganism, and the ingrained habits of an ancient, and at the same time an effete, society, continually paralysed its energies. What Europe would have been without the barbarian invasions we may partly divine from the history of the Lower Empire, which represented, in fact, the old Roman civilisation prolonged and Christianised. The barbarian conquests, breaking up the old organisation, provided the Church with a virgin soil, and made it, for a long period, the supreme and, indeed, sole centre of civilisation.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the skill and courage displayed by the ecclesiastics in this most trying period. We have already seen the noble daring with which they interfered between the conqueror and the vanquished, and the unwearied charity with which they sought

atrocious cruelties perpetrated by Majendie at his lectures. See a most frightful account of them in a speech by Mr. Martin (an eccentric Irish member, who was generally ridiculed during his life, and has been almost forgotten since his death, but to whose untiring exertions the legislative protection of animals in England is due). (*Parliament. Hist.* vol. xii. p. 65a.) Mandeville, in his day, was a very strong advocate of kindness to animals. (*Commentary on the Fable of the Bees*.)

¹ See his *Life* by Sulpicius Severus.

¹ Milman.

to alleviate the unparalleled sufferings of Italy, when the colonial supplies of corn were cut off, and when the fairest plains were desolated by the barbarians. Still more wonderful is the rapid conversion of the barbarian tribes. Unfortunately this, which is one of the most important, is also one of the most obscure pages in the history of the Church. Of whole tribes or nations it may be truly said that we are absolutely ignorant of the cause of their change. The Goths had already been converted by Ulphilas, before the downfall of the Empire, and the conversion of the Germans and of several northern nations was long posterior to it; but the great work of Christianising the barbarian world was accomplished almost in the hour when that world became supreme. Rude tribes, accustomed in their own lands to pay absolute obedience to their priests, found themselves in a foreign country, confronted by a priesthood far more civilised and imposing than that which they had left, by gorgeous ceremonies, well fitted to entice, and by threats of coming judgment, well fitted to scare their imaginations. Disconnected from all their old associations, they bowed before the majesty of civilisation, and the Latin religion, like the Latin language, though with many adulterations, reigned over the new society. The doctrine of exclusive salvation, and the doctrine of dæmons, had an admirable missionary power. The first produced an ardour of proselytising which the polytheist could never rival, while the pagan, who was easily led to recognise the Christian God, was menaced with eternal fire if he did not take the further step of breaking off from his old divinities. The second dispensed the convert from the perhaps impossible task of disbelieving his former religion, for it was only necessary for him to degrade it, attributing its prodigies to infernal beings. The priests, in addition to their noble devotion, carried into their missionary efforts the most masterly judgment. The barbarian tribes usually followed without enquiry the religion of their sovereign; and it was to the conversion of the king, and still more to the conversion of the queen, that the Christians devoted all their energies. Clotilda, the wife of Clovis, Bertha, the wife of Ethelbert, and Theodolinda, the wife of Lothaire, were the chief instruments in converting their husbands and their nations. Nothing that could affect the

imagination was neglected. It is related of Clotilda that she was careful to attract her husband by the rich draperies of the ecclesiastical ceremonies.¹ In another case, the first work of proselytising was confided to an artist, who painted before the terrified pagans the last judgment and the torments of hell.² But especially the belief, which was sincerely held, and sedulously inculcated, that temporal success followed in the train of Christianity, and that every pestilence, famine, or military disaster was the penalty of idolatry, heresy, sacrilege, or vice, assisted the movement. The theory was so wide, that it met every variety of fortune, and being taught with consummate skill, to barbarians who were totally destitute of all critical power, and strongly predisposed to accept it, it proved extremely efficacious; and hope, fear, gratitude, and remorse drew multitudes into the Church. The transition was softened by the substitution of Christian ceremonies and saints for the festivals and the divinities of the pagans.³ Besides the professed missionaries, the Christian captives zealously diffused their faith among their pagan masters. When the chieftain had been converted, and the army had followed his profession, an elaborate monastic and ecclesiastical organisation grew up to consolidate the conquest, and repressive laws soon crushed all opposition to the faith.

In these ways the victory of Christianity over the barbarian world was achieved. But that victory, though very great, was less decisive than might appear. A religion which professed to be Christianity, and which contained many of the ingredients of pure Christianity, had risen into the ascendant, but it had undergone a profound modification through the struggle. Religions, as well as worshippers, had been baptised. The festivals, images, and names of saints had been substituted for those of the idols, and the habits of thought and feeling of the ancient faith reappeared in new forms and a new language. The tendency to a material, idolatrous, and polytheistic faith, which had long been encouraged by the monks, and which the heretics

¹ Greg. Turon. ii. 29

² This was the first step towards the conversion of the Bulgarians. (Milman's *Latin Christianity*, vol. iii. p. 249.)

³ A remarkable collection of instances of this kind is given by Ozanam, *Civilisation in the Fifth Century* (Eng. trans.), vol. i. pp. 124-127.

Jovinian, Vigilantius, and Aerius had vainly resisted, was fatally strengthened by the infusion of a barbarian element into the Church, by the general depression of intellect in Europe, and by the many accommodations that were made to facilitate conversion. Though apparently defeated and crushed, the old gods still retained, under a new faith, no small part of their influence over the world.

To this tendency the leaders of the Church made in general no resistance, though in another form they were deeply persuaded of the vitality of the old gods. Many curious and picturesque legends attest the popular belief that the old Roman and the old barbarian divinities, in their capacity of dæmons, were still waging an unrelenting war against the triumphant faith. A great Pope of the sixth century relates how a Jew, being once benighted on his journey, and finding no other shelter for the night, lay down to rest in an abandoned temple of Apollo. Shuddering at the loneliness of the building, and fearing the dæmons who were said to haunt it, he determined, though not a Christian, to protect himself by the sign of the cross, which he had often heard possessed a mighty power against spirits. To that sign he owed his safety. For at midnight the temple was filled with dark and threatening forms. The god Apollo was holding his court at his deserted shrine, and his attendant dæmons were recounting the temptations they had devised against the Christians.¹ A newly married Roman, when one day playing ball, took off his wedding-ring, which he found an impediment in the game, and he gaily put it on the finger of a statue of Venus that was standing near. When he returned, the marble finger had bent so that it was impossible to withdraw the ring, and that night the goddess appeared to him in a dream, and told him that she was now his wedded wife, and that she would abide with him for ever.² When the Irish missionary St. Gall was fishing one night upon a Swiss lake, near which he had planted a monastery, he heard strange voices sweeping over the lonely deep.

The Spirit of the Water and the Spirit of the Mountains were consulting together how they could expel the intruder who had disturbed their ancient reign.³

The details of the rapid propagation of Western monachism have been amply treated by many historians, and the causes of its success are sufficiently manifest. Some of the reasons I have assigned for the first spread of asceticism continued to operate, while others of a still more powerful kind had arisen. The rapid decomposition of the entire Roman Empire by continuous invasions of barbarians rendered the existence of an inviolable asylum and centre of peaceful labour a matter of transcendent importance, and the monastery as organised by St. Benedict soon combined the most heterogeneous elements of attraction. It was at once eminently aristocratic and intensely democratic. The power and princely position of the abbot were coveted, and usually obtained, by members of the most illustrious families; while emancipated serfs, or peasants who had lost their all in the invasions, or were harassed by savage nobles, or had fled from military service, or desired to lead a more secure and easy life, found in the monastery an unfailing refuge. The institution exercised all the influence of great wealth, expended for the most part with great charity, while the monk himself was invested with the aureole of a sacred poverty. To ardent and philanthropic natures the profession opened boundless vistas of missionary, charitable, and civilising activity. To the superstitious it was the plain road to heaven. To the ambitious it was the portal to bishoprics, and, after the monk St. Gregory, not infrequently to the Popedom. To the studious it offered the only opportunity then existing in the world of seeing many books and passing a life of study. To the timid and retiring it afforded the most secure, and probably the least laborious, life a poor peasant could hope to find. Vast as were the multitudes that thronged the monasteries, the means for their support were never wanting. The belief that gifts or legacies to a monastery opened the doors of heaven was in a superstitious age sufficient to secure for the community an almost boundless wealth, which was still further increased by the skill and perseverance with which

¹ St. Gregory, *Dial.* ii. 7. The particular temptation the Jew heard discussed was that of the bishop of the diocese, who, under the instigation of one of the dæmons, was rapidly falling in love with a nun, and had proceeded so far as jocosely to stroke her on the back. The Jew having related the vision to the bishop, the latter reformed his manners, the Jew became a Christian, and the temple was turned into a church.

² William of Malmesbury, ii. 13.

³ See Milman's *Hist. of Latin Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 293.

the monks tilled the waste lands, by the exemption of their domains from all taxation, and by the tranquillity which in the most turbulent ages they usually enjoyed. In France, the Low Countries, and Germany they were pre-eminently agriculturists. Gigantic forests were felled, inhospitable marshes reclaimed, barren plains cultivated by their hands. The monastery often became the nucleus of a city. It was the centre of civilisation and industry, the symbol of moral power in an age of turbulence and war.

It must be observed, however, that the beneficial influence of the monastic system was necessarily transitional, and the subsequent corruption the normal and inevitable result of its constitution. Vast societies living in enforced celibacy, exercising an unbounded influence, and possessing enormous wealth, must necessarily have become hotbeds of corruption when the enthusiasm that had created them expired. The services they rendered as the centres of agriculture, the refuge of travellers, the sanctuaries in war, the counterpoise of the baronial castle, were no longer required when the convulsions of invasion had ceased and when civil society was definitely organised. And a similar observation may be extended even to their moral type. Thus, while it is undoubtedly true that the Benedictine monks, by making labour an essential element of their discipline, did very much to efface the stigma which slavery had affixed upon it, it is also true that, when industry had passed out of its initial stage, the monastic theories of the sanctity of poverty, and the evil of wealth, were its most deadly opponents. The dogmatic condemnation by theologians of loans at interest, which are the basis of industrial enterprise, was the expression of a far deeper antagonism of tendencies and ideals.

In one important respect the transition from the eremitic to the monastic life involved not only a change of circumstances, but also a change of character. The habit of obedience, and the virtue of humility, assumed a position which they had never previously occupied. The conditions of the hermit life contributed to develop to a very high degree a spirit of independence and spiritual pride, which was still further increased by a curious habit that existed in the Church of regarding each eminent hermit as the special model or professor of some parti-

cular virtue, and making pilgrimages to him, in order to study this aspect of his character.¹ These pilgrimages, combined with the usually solitary and self-sufficing life of the hermit, and also with the habit of measuring progress almost entirely by the suppression of a physical appetite, which it is quite possible wholly to destroy, very naturally produced an extreme arrogance.² But in the highly organised and disciplined monasteries of the West, passive obedience and humility were the very first things that were inculcated. The monastery, beyond all other institutions, was the school for their exercise; and as the monk represented the highest moral ideal of the age, obedience and humility acquired a new value in the minds of men. Nearly all the feudal and other organisations that arose out of the chaos that followed the destruction of the Roman Empire were intimately related to the Church, not simply because the Church was the strongest power in Christendom, and supplied in itself an admirable model of an organised body, but also because it had done much to educate men in habits of obedience. The special value of this education depended upon the peculiar circumstances of the time. The ancient civilisations, and especially that of Rome, had been by no means deficient in those habits; but it was in the midst of the dissolution of an old society, and of the ascendancy of barbarians, who exaggerated to the highest degree their personal independence, that the Church proposed to the reverence of mankind a life of passive obedience as the highest ideal of virtue.

The habit of obedience was no new thing in the world, but the disposition of humility was pre-eminently and almost exclusively a Christian virtue; and there has probably never been any sphere in

¹ Cassian, *Canob. Instit.* v. 4. See, too, some striking instances of this in the life of St. Antony.

² This spiritual pride is well noticed by Neander, *Ecclesiastical History* (Bohn's ed.), vol. iii. pp. 221-223. It appears in many traits scattered through the lives of these saints. I have already cited the visions telling St. Antony and St. Macarius that they were not the best of living people; and also the case of the hermit who was deceived by a devil in the form of a woman, because he had been exalted by pride. Another hermit, being very holy, received pure white bread every day from heaven; but, he being extravagantly elated, the bread got worse and worse till it became perfectly black. (Tillemont, tome x. pp. 27-28.) A certain Isidore affirmed that he had not been conscious of sin, even in thought, for forty years. (Socrates, iv. 23.) It was a saying of St. Antony, that a solitary man in the desert is free from three wars—of sight, speech, and hearing: he has to combat only fornication. (*Apothegmata Patrum*.)

which it has been so largely and so successfully inculcated as in the monastery. The whole penitential discipline, the entire mode or tenour of the monastic life, was designed to tame every sentiment of pride, and to give humility a foremost place in the hierarchy of virtues. We have here one great source of the mollifying influence of Catholicism. The gentler virtues — benevolence and amiability — may, and in an advanced civilisation often do, subsist in natures that are completely devoid of genuine humility; but, on the other hand, it is scarcely possible for a nature to be pervaded by a deep sentiment of humility without this sentiment exercising a softening influence over the whole character. To transform a fierce, warlike nature into a character of a gentler type, the first essential is to awaken this feeling. In the monasteries the extinction of social and domestic feelings, the narrow corporate spirit, and, still more, the atrocious opinions that were prevalent concerning the guilt of heresy, produced in many minds an extreme and most active ferocity; but the practice of charity, and the ideal of humility, never failed to exercise some softening influence upon Christendom.

But however advantageous the temporary pre-eminence of this moral type may have been, it was obviously unsuited for a later stage of civilisation. Political liberty is almost impossible where the monastic system is supreme, not merely because the monasteries divert the energies of the nation from civic to ecclesiastical channels, but also because the monastic ideal is the very apotheosis of servitude. Catholicism has been admirably fitted at once to mitigate and to perpetuate despotism. When men have learnt to reverence a life of passive, unreasoning obedience as the highest type of perfection, the enthusiasm and passion of freedom necessarily decline. In this respect there is an analogy between the monastic and the military spirit, both of which promote and glorify passive obedience, and therefore prepare the minds of men for despotic rule; but, on the whole, the monastic spirit is probably more hostile to freedom than the military spirit, for the obedience of the monk is based upon humility, while the obedience of the soldier coexists with pride. Now, a considerable measure of pride, or self-assertion, is an invariable characteristic of free communities.

The ascendancy which the monastic system gave to the virtue of humility has not continued. This virtue is indeed the crowning grace and beauty of the most perfect characters of the saintly type; but experience has shown that among common men humility is more apt to degenerate into servility than pride into arrogance; and modern moralists have appealed more successfully to the sense of dignity than to the opposite feeling. Two of the most important steps of later moral history have consisted of the creation of a sentiment of pride as the parent and the guardian of many virtues. The first of these encroachments on the monastic spirit was chivalry, which called into being a proud and jealous military honour that has never since been extinguished. The second was the creation of that feeling of self-respect which is one of the most remarkable characteristics that distinguish Protestant from the most Catholic populations, and which has proved among the former an invaluable moral agent, forming frank and independent natures, and checking every servile habit and all mean and degrading vice.* The peculiar vigour with which it has been developed in Protestant countries may be attributed to the suppression of monastic institutions and habits; to the stigma Protestantism has attached to mendicancy, which Catholicism has usually glorified and encouraged; to the high place Protestantism has accorded to private judgment and personal responsibility; and, lastly, to the action of free political institutions, which have taken deepest root where the principles of the Reformation have been accepted.

The relation of the monasteries to the

* "Pride, under such training [that of modern rationalistic philosophy], instead of running to waste, is turned to account. It gets a new name, it is called self-respect. It is directed into the channel of industry, frugality, honesty, and obedience, and it becomes the very staple of the religion and morality held in honour in a day like our own. It becomes the safeguard of chastity, the guarantee of veracity, in high and low; it is the very household god of the Protestant, inspiring neatness and decency in the servant-girl, propriety of carriage and refined manners in her mistress, uprightness, manliness, and generosity in the head of the family. It is the stimulating principle of providence on the one hand, and of free expenditure on the other; of an honourable ambition and of elegant enjoyment." (Newman, *On University Education*, Discourse ix.) In the same lecture (which is, perhaps, the most beautiful of the many beautiful productions of its illustrious author) Dr. Newman describes, with admirable eloquence, the manner in which modesty has supplanted humility in the modern type of excellence. It is scarcely necessary to say that the lecturer strongly disapproves of the movement he describes.

intellectual virtues, which we have next to examine, opens out a wide field of discussion; and in order to appreciate it, it will be necessary to revert briefly to a somewhat earlier stage of ecclesiastical history. And, in the first place, it may be observed that the phrase intellectual virtue, which is often used in a metaphorical sense, is susceptible of a strictly literal interpretation. If a sincere and active desire for truth be a moral duty, the discipline and the dispositions that are plainly involved in every honest search fall rigidly within the range of ethics. To love truth sincerely means to pursue it with an earnest, conscientious, unflagging zeal. It means to be prepared to follow the light of evidence even to the most unwelcome conclusions; to labour earnestly to emancipate the mind from early prejudices; to resist the current of the desires, and the refracting influence of the passions; to proportion on all occasions conviction to evidence, and to be ready, if need be, to exchange the calm of assurance for all the suffering of a perplexed and disturbed mind. To do this is very difficult and very painful; but it is clearly involved in the notion of earnest love of truth. If, then, any system stigmatises as criminal the state of doubt, denounces the examination of some one class of arguments or facts, seeks to introduce the bias of the affections into the enquiries of the reason, or regards the honest conclusion of an upright investigator as involving moral guilt, that system is subversive of intellectual honesty.

Among the ancients, although the methods of enquiry were often very faulty, and generalisations very hasty, a respect for the honest search after truth was wisely diffused.² There were, as we have already seen, instances in which certain religious practices which were regarded as attestations of loyalty, or as necessary to propitiate the gods in favour of the State, were enforced bylaw; there were even a few instances of philosophies which were believed to lead directly to immoral results or social convulsions, being suppressed; but, as a general rule, speculation was untrammelled, the notion of there being any necessary guilt in erro-

neous opinion was unknown, and the boldest enquirers were regarded with honour and admiration. The religious theory of paganism had in this respect some influence. Polytheism, with many faults, had three great merits. It was eminently poetical, eminently patriotic, and eminently tolerant. The conception of a vast hierarchy of beings more glorious than, but not wholly unlike, men, presiding over all the developments of nature, and filling the universe with their deeds, supplied the chief nutriment of the Greek imagination. The national religions, interweaving religious ceremonies and associations with all civic life, concentrated and intensified the sentiment of patriotism, and the notion of many distinct groups of gods led men to tolerate many forms of worship and great variety of creeds. In that colossal amalgam of nations of which Rome became the metropolis, intellectual liberty still further advanced; the vast variety of philosophies and beliefs expatiated unmolested; the search for truth was regarded as an important element of virtue, and the relentless and most sceptical criticism which Socrates had applied in turn to all the fundamental propositions of popular belief remained as an example to his successors.

We have already seen that one leading cause of the rapid progress of the Church was that its teachers enforced their distinctive tenets as absolutely essential to salvation, and thus assailed at a great advantage the supporters of all other creeds which did not claim this exclusive authority. We have seen, too, that in an age of great and growing credulity they had been conspicuous for their assertion of the duty of absolute, unqualified, and unquestioning belief. The notion of the guilt both of error and of doubt grew rapidly, and, being soon regarded as a fundamental tenet, it determined the whole course and policy of the Church.

And here, I think, it will not be unadvisable to pause for a moment, and endeavour to ascertain what misconceived truth lay at the root of this fatal tenet. Considered abstractedly and by the light of nature, it is as unmeaning to speak of the immorality of an intellectual mistake as it would be to talk of the colour of a sound. If a man has sincerely persuaded himself that it is possible for parallel lines to meet, or for two straight lines to enclose a space, we pronounce his

² Thus "*indagatio veri*" was reckoned among the leading virtues, and the high place given to *sophia* and "*prudentia*" in ethical writings preserved the notion of the moral duties connected with the discipline of the intellect.

judgment to be absurd, but it is free from all tincture of immorality. And if, instead of failing to appreciate a demonstrable truth, his error consisted in a false estimate of the conflicting arguments of an historical problem, this mistake—assuming always that the enquiry was an upright one—is still simply external to the sphere of morals. It is possible that his conclusion, by weakening some barrier against vice, may produce vicious consequences, like those which might ensue from some ill-advised modification of the police force; but it in no degree follows from this that the judgment is in itself criminal. If a student applies himself with the same dispositions to Roman and Jewish histories, the mistakes he may make in the latter are no more immoral than those which he may make in the former.

There are, however, two cases in which an intellectual error may be justly said to involve, or at least to represent, guilt. In the first place, error very frequently springs from the partial or complete absence of that mental disposition which is implied in a real love of truth. Hypocrites, or men who through interested motives profess opinions which they do not really believe, are probably rarer than is usually supposed; but it would be difficult to over-estimate the number of those whose genuine convictions are due to the unresisted bias of their interests. By the term interests I mean not only material well-being, but also all those mental luxuries, all those grooves or channels for thought which it is easy and pleasing to follow and painful and difficult to abandon. Such are the love of ease, the love of certainty, the love of system, the bias of the passions, the associations of the imagination, as well as the coarser influences of social position, domestic happiness, professional interest, party feeling, or ambition. In most men the love of truth is so languid, and the reluctance to encounter mental suffering is so great, that they yield their judgments without an effort to the current, withdraw their minds from all opinions or arguments opposed to their own, and thus speedily convince themselves of the truth of what they wish to believe. He who really loves truth is bound, at least, to endeavour to resist these distorting influences, and in as far as his opinions are the result of his not having done so, in so far they represent a moral failing.

In the next place, it must be observed that every moral disposition brings with it an intellectual bias which exercises a great and often a controlling and decisive influence even upon the most earnest enquirer. If we know the character or disposition of a man, we can usually predict with tolerable accuracy many of his opinions. We can tell to what side of politics, to what canons of taste, to what theory of morals, he will naturally incline. Stern, heroic, and haughty natures tend to systems in which these qualities occupy the foremost position in the moral type; while gentle natures will as naturally lean towards systems in which the amiable virtues are supreme. Impelled by a species of moral gravitation, the enquirer will glide insensibly to the system which is congruous to his disposition, and intellectual difficulties will seldom arrest him. He can have observed human nature with but little fruit who has not remarked how constant is this connection, and how very rarely men change fundamentally the principles they had deliberately adopted on religious, moral, or even political questions, without the change being preceded, accompanied, or very speedily followed by a serious modification of character. So, too, a vicious and depraved nature, or a nature which is hard, narrow, and unsympathetic, will tend, much less by calculation or indolence than by natural affinity, to low and degrading views of human nature. Those who have never felt the higher emotions will scarcely appreciate them. The materials with which the intellect builds are often derived from the heart, and a moral disease is, therefore, not unfrequently at the root of an erroneous judgment.

Of these two truths the first cannot, I think, be said to have had any influence in the formation of the theological notion of the guilt of error. An elaborate process of mental discipline, with a view to strengthening the critical powers of the mind, is utterly remote from the spirit of theology; and this is one of the great reasons why the growth of an inductive and scientific spirit is invariably hostile to theological interests. To raise the requisite standard of proof, to inculcate hardness and slowness of belief, is the first task of the inductive reasoner. He looks with great favour upon the condition of a suspended judgment, he encourages men rather to prolong than to abridge it; he regards the tendency of

the human mind to rapid and premature generalisations as one of its most fatal vices; he desires especially that that which is believed should not be so cherished that the mind should be indisposed to admit doubt, or, on the appearance of new arguments, to revise with impartiality its conclusions. Nearly all the greatest intellectual achievements of the last three centuries have been preceded and prepared by the growth of scepticism. The historic scepticism which Vico, Beaufort, Pouilly, and Voltaire in the last [eighteenth] century, and Niebuhr and Lewis in the present [nineteenth] century, applied to ancient history, lies at the root of all the great modern efforts to reconstruct the history of mankind. The splendid discoveries of physical science would have been impossible but for the scientific scepticism of the school of Bacon, which dissipated the old theories of the universe, and led men to demand a severity of proof altogether unknown to the ancients. The philosophic scepticism with which the system of Hume ended and the system of Kant began has given the greatest modern impulse to metaphysics and ethics. Exactly in proportion, therefore, as men are educated in the inductive school, they are alienated from those theological systems which represent a condition of doubt as sinful, seek to govern the reason by the interests and the affections, and make it a main object to destroy the impartiality of the judgment.

But although it is difficult to look upon Catholicism in any other light than as the most deadly enemy of the scientific spirit, it has always cordially recognised the most important truth that character in a very great measure determines opinions. To cultivate the moral type that is most congenial to the opinions it desires to recommend has always been its effort, and the conviction that a deviation from that type has often been the predisposing cause of intellectual heresy, had doubtless a large share in the first persuasion of the guilt of error. But priestly and other influences soon conspired to enlarge this doctrine. A crowd of speculative, historical, and administrative propositions were asserted as essential to salvation, and all who rejected them were wholly external to the bond of Christian sympathy.

If, indeed, we put aside the pure teaching of the Christian founders, and consider

the actual history of the Church since Constantine, we shall find no justification for the popular theory that beneath its influence the narrow spirit of patriotism faded into a wide and cosmopolitan philanthropy. A real though somewhat languid feeling of universal brotherhood had already been created in the world by the universality of the Roman Empire. In the new faith the range of genuine sympathy was strictly limited by the creed. According to the popular belief, all who differed from the teaching of the orthodox lived under the hatred of the Almighty, and were destined after death for an eternity of anguish. Very naturally, therefore, they were wholly alienated from the true believers, and no moral or intellectual excellence could atone for their crime in propagating error. The eighty or ninety sects,¹ into which Christianity speedily divided, hated one another with an intensity that extorted the wonder of Julian and the ridicule of the pagans of Alexandria; and the fierce riots and persecutions that hatred produced appear in every page of ecclesiastical history. There is, indeed, something at once grotesque and ghastly in the spectacle. The Donatists, having separated from the orthodox simply on the question of the validity of the consecration of a certain bishop, declared that all who adopted the orthodox view must be damned, refused to perform their rites in the orthodox churches which they had seized till they had burnt the altar and scraped the wood, beat multitudes to death with clubs, blinded others by anointing their eyes with lime, filled Africa during nearly two centuries with war and desolation, and contributed largely to its final ruin.² The childish and almost unintelligible quarrels between the Homoiousians and the Homoeousians, between those who maintained that the nature of Christ was like that of the Father and those who maintained that it was the same, filled the world with riot and hatred. The Catholics tell how an Arian Emperor caused eighty orthodox priests to be drowned on a single occasion;³ how three thousand persons perished in the riots that convulsed Constantinople when the Arian Bishop Macedonius superseded

¹ St. Augustine reckoned eighty-eight sects as existing in his time.

² See a full account of these persecutions in Tillemont, *Mém. d'Histoire Ecclesi.* tome vi.

³ Socrates, *H. E.*, iv. 16. This anecdote is much doubted by modern historians.

the Athanasian Paul,¹ how George of Cappadocia, the Arian Bishop of Alexandria, caused the widows of the Athanasian party to be scourged on the soles of their feet, the holy virgins to be stripped naked, to be flogged with the prickly branches of palm-trees, or to be slowly scorched over fires till they abjured their creed.² The triumph of the Catholics in Egypt was accompanied (if we may believe the solemn assertions of eighty Arian bishops) by every variety of plunder, murder, sacrilege, and outrage;³ and Arius himself was probably poisoned by Catholic hands.⁴ The followers of St. Cyril of Alexandria, who were chiefly monks, filled their city with riot and bloodshed, wounded the prefect Orestes, dragged the pure and gifted Hypatia into one of their churches, murdered her, tore the flesh from her bones with sharp shells, and, having stripped her body naked, flung her mangled remains into the flames.⁵ In Ephesus, during the contest between St. Cyril and the Nestorians, the cathedral itself was the theatre of a fierce and bloody conflict.⁶ Constantinople, on the occasion of the deposition of St. Chrysostom, was for several days in a condition of absolute anarchy.⁷ After the Council of Chalcedon, Jerusalem and Alexandria were again convulsed, and the bishop of the latter city was murdered in his baptistery.⁸ About fifty years later, when the Monophysite controversy was at its height, the palace of the Emperor at Constantinople was blockaded, the churches were besieged, and the streets commanded by furious bands of contending monks.⁹ Repressed for a time, the riots broke out two years after with an increased ferocity, and almost every leading city of the East was filled by the monks with bloodshed and with outrage.¹⁰ St. Augustine himself is ac-

cused of having excited every kind of popular persecution against the Semi-Pelagians.¹ The Councils, animated by an almost frantic hatred, urged on by their anathemas the rival sects.² In the "Robber Council" of Ephesus, Flavianus, the Bishop of Constantinople, was kicked and beaten by the Bishop of Alexandria, or at least by his followers, and a few days later died from the effect of the blows.³ In the contested election that resulted in the choice of St. Damascus as Pope of Rome, though no theological question appears to have been at issue, the riots were so fierce that one hundred and thirty-seven corpses were found in one of the churches.⁴ The precedent of the Jewish persecutions of idolatry, having been adduced by St. Cyprian, in the third century, in favour of excommunication,⁵ was urged by Optatus, in the reign of Constantine, in favour of persecuting the Donatists;⁶ in the next reign we find a large body of Christians presenting to the emperor a petition, based upon this precedent, imploring him to destroy by force the pagan worship.⁷ About fifteen years later the whole Christian Church was prepared, on the same grounds, to support the persecuting policy of St. Ambrose,⁸

the history, "Monks in Alexandria, monks in Antioch, monks in Jerusalem, monks in Constantinople, decide peremptorily on orthodoxy and heresy. The bishops themselves cower before their fanatic us in Constantinople, Flavianus in Antioch, Elias in Jerusalem, condemn themselves and abdicate, or are driven from their sees. Persecution is universal—persecution by every means of violence and cruelty, the only question is, in whose hands is the power to persecute. Bloodshed, murder, treachery, assassination, even during the public worship of God—these are the frightful means by which each party strives, to maintain its opinions and to defeat its adversary."

¹ See a striking passage from Julianus of Eclana, cited by Milman, *Hist. of Latin Christianity*, vol. i. p. 164.

² "Nowhere is Christianity less attractive than in the Councils of the Church. Intrigue, injustice, violence, decisions on authority alone, and that the authority of a turbulent majority detract from the reverence and impugn the judgments of at least the later Councils. The close is almost invariably a terrible anathema, in which it is impossible not to discern the tones of human hatred, of arrogant triumph, of rejoicing at the damnation unprecipitated against the humiliated adversary." (*Ibid.* vol. i. p. 202.)

³ See the account of this scene in Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, ch. xiv. 1. Milman, *Hist. of Latin Christianity*, vol. i. p. 263. There is a conflict of authorities as to whether the Bishop of Alexandria himself kicked his adversary; or, to speak more correctly, the act which is charged against him by some contemporary writers is not charged against him by others. The violence was certainly done by his followers and in his presence.

⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, lvi. 1. 3.

⁵ Cyprian, *Ep.* lxi.

⁶ Milman, *Hist. of Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 306.

⁷ *Ibid.* iii. 10.

⁸ "By this time the Old Testament language and

¹ Milman's *Hist. of Christianity* (ed. 1867), vol. ii. p. 422.

² St. Athanasius, *Historical Treatises* (Library of the Fathers), pp. 192, 284.

³ Milman, *Hist. of Christianity*, ii. pp. 436-437.

⁴ The death of Arius, as is well known, took place suddenly (his bowels, it is said, coming out) when he was just about to make his triumphal entry into the Cathedral of Constantinople. The death (though possibly natural) never seems to have been regarded as such, but it was a matter of controversy whether it was a miracle or a murder.

⁵ Socrates, *H. E.*, vi. 13-15.

⁶ Milman, *Hist. of Latin Christianity*, vol. i. pp. 214-215.

⁷ Milman, *Hist. of Christianity*, vol. iii. p. 145.

⁸ Milman, *Hist. of Latin Christianity*, vol. i. pp. 290-291.

⁹ *Ibid.* vol. i. pp. 310-311.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* vol. i. pp. 314-318. Dean Milman thus sums up

the contending sects having found, in the duty of crushing religious liberty, the solitary tenet on which they were agreed. The most unaggressive and unobtrusive forms of paganism were persecuted with the same ferocity.¹ To offer a sacrifice was to commit a capital offence; to hang up a simple chaplet was to incur the forfeiture of an estate. The noblest works of Asiatic architecture and of Greek sculpture perished by the same iconoclasm that shattered the humble temple at which the peasant loved to pray, or the household gods which consecrated his home. There were no varieties of belief too minute for the new intolerance to embitter. The question of the proper time of celebrating Easter was believed to involve the issue of salvation or damnation,² and when, long after, in the fourteenth century, the question of the nature of the light at the transfiguration was discussed at Constantinople, those who refused to admit that that light was uncreated were deprived of the honours of Christian burial.³

Together with these legislative and ecclesiastical measures, a literature arose surpassing in its mendacious ferocity any other the world had known. The polemical writers habitually painted as demons those who diverged from the orthodox belief, gloated with a vindictive piety over the sufferings of the heretic upon earth as upon a Divine punishment, and sometimes, with an almost superhuman malice, passing in imagination beyond the threshold of the grave, exulted in no ambiguous terms on the tortures which they believed to be reserved for him for ever. A few men, such as Synesius, Basil, or Salvian, might still find some excellence in pagans or

heretics, but their candour was altogether exceptional; and he who will compare the beautiful pictures the Greek poets gave of their Trojan adversaries, or the Roman historians of the enemies of their country, with those which ecclesiastical writers for many centuries almost invariably gave of all who were opposed to their Church, may easily estimate the extent to which cosmopolitan sympathy had retrograded.

At the period, however, when the Western monasteries began to discharge their intellectual functions, the supremacy of Catholicism was nearly established, and polemical ardour had begun to wane. The literary zeal of the Church took other forms, but all were deeply tinged by the monastic spirit. It is difficult or impossible to conceive what would have been the intellectual future of the world had Catholicism never arisen—what principles or impulses would have guided the course of the human mind, or what new institutions would have been created for its culture. Under the influence of Catholicism the monastery became the one sphere of intellectual labour, and it continued during many centuries to occupy that position. Without entering into anything resembling a literary history, which would be foreign to the objects of the present work, I shall endeavour briefly to estimate the manner in which it discharged its functions.

The first idea that is naturally suggested by the mention of the intellectual services of monasteries is the preservation of the writings of the pagans. I have already observed that among the early Christians there was a marked difference on the subject of their writings. The school which was represented by Tertullian regarded them with abhorrence; while the Platonists, who were represented by Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, not merely recognised with great cordiality their beauties, but even imagined that they could detect in them both the traces of an original Divine inspiration and plagiarisms from the Jewish writings. While avoiding for the most part these extremes, St. Augustine, the great organiser of Western Christianity, treats the pagan writings with appreciative respect. He had himself ascribed his first conversion from a course of vice to the *Hortensius* of Cicero; and his works are full of discriminating, and often very beautiful, applications of

sentiment with regard to idolatry were completely incorporated with the Christian feeling; and when Ambrose enforced on a Christian emperor the sacred duty of intolerance against opinions and practices which scarcely a century before had been the established religion of the Empire, his zeal was supported by almost the unanimous applause of the Christian world." (Milman's *Hist. of Christianity*, vol. iii. p. 159.)

¹ See the Theodosian laws of paganism.

² This appears from the whole history of the controversy; but the prevailing feeling is, I think, expressed with peculiar vividness in the following passage: "Eaerner says (following the words of Bede) in Colman's times there was a sharp controversy about the observing of Easter, and other rules of life for churchmen: therefore, this question deservedly excited the minds and feeling of many people, fearing lest, perhaps, after having received the name of Christians, they should run, or had run, in vain." (King's *Hist. of the Church of Ireland*, book ii. ch. vi.)

³ Gibbon, chap. lxiii.

the old Roman literature. The attempt of Julian to prevent the Christians from teaching the classics, and the extreme resentment which that attempt elicited, show how highly the Christian leaders of that period valued this form of education; and it was naturally the more cherished on account of the contest. The influence of Neo-Platonism, the baptism of multitudes of nominal Christians after Constantine, and the decline of zeal which necessarily accompanied prosperity, had all in different ways the same tendency. In Synesius we have the curious phenomenon of a bishop who, not content with proclaiming himself the admiring friend of the pagan Hypatia, openly declared his complete disbelief in the resurrection of the body, and his firm adhesion to the Platonic doctrine of the pre-existence of souls.¹ Had the ecclesiastical theory prevailed which gave such latitude even to the leaders of the Church, the course of Christianity would have been very different. A reactionary spirit, however, arose at Rome. The doctrine of exclusive salvation supplied its intellectual basis; the political and organising genius of the Roman ecclesiastics impelled them to reduce belief into a rigid form; the genius of St. Gregory guided the movement,² and a series of historical events, of which the ecclesiastical and political separation of the Western Empire from the speculative Greeks, and the invasion and conversion of the barbarians, were the most important, definitely established the ascendancy of the Catholic type. In the convulsions that followed the barbarian invasions intellectual

energy of a secular kind almost absolutely ceased. A parting gleam issued, indeed, in the sixth century, from the Court of Theodoric, at Ravenna, which was adorned by the genius of Boethius and the talent of Cassiodorus and Symmachus; but after this time for a long period literature consisted almost exclusively of sermons and lives of saints, which were composed in the monasteries.³ Gregory of Tours was succeeded as an annalist by the still feeble Fredegarius, and there was then a long and absolute blank. A few outlying countries showed some faint animation. St. Leander and St. Isidore planted at Seville a school which flourished in the seventh century, and the distant monasteries of Ireland continued somewhat later to be the receptacles of learning; but the rest of Europe sank into an almost absolute torpor till the rationalism of Abelard, and the events that followed the Crusades, began the revival of learning. The principal service which Catholicism rendered during this period to pagan literature was probably the perpetuation of Latin as a sacred language. The complete absence of all curiosity about literature is shown by the fact that Greek was suffered to become almost absolutely extinct, though there was no time when the Western nations had not some relations with the Greek Empire, or when pilgrimages to the Holy Land altogether ceased. The study of the Latin classics was for the most part positively discouraged. The writers, it was believed, were burning in hell; the monks were too inflated with their imaginary knowledge to regard with any respect a pagan writer; and periodical panics about the approaching termination of the world continually checked any desire for secular learning.⁴ It was the custom among

¹ An interesting sketch of this very interesting prelate has lately been written by M. Druon, *Étude sur la Vie et les Œuvres de Synésius* (Paris, 1859).

² Tradition has pronounced Gregory the Great to have been the destroyer of the Palatine Library, and to have been especially zealous in burning the writings of Lamy, because they described the achievements of the pagan gods. For these charges, however (which I am sorry to find repeated by so eminent a writer as Dr. Draper), there is no real evidence, for they are not found in any writer earlier than the twelfth century. (See Bayle, *Dict. art. "Greg."*) The extreme contempt of Gregory for pagan literature is, however, sufficiently manifested in his famous and very curious letter to Desiderius, Bishop of Vienne, rebuking him for having taught certain persons pagan literature, and thus mingled "the praises of Jupiter with the praises of Christ"; doing what would be impious even for a religious layman, "polluting the mind with the blasphemous praises of the wicked." Some curious evidence of the feelings of the Christians of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries about pagan literature is given in Guignée, *Hist. littéraire de l'Italie*, tome 1, pp. 29-31, and some legends of a later period are candidly related by one of the most enthusiastic English advocates of the Middle Ages (Maitland, *Dark Ages*).

³ Probably the best account of the intellectual history of these times is still to be found in the admirable introductory chapters with which the Benedictines prefaced each century of their *Hist. littéraire de la France*. The Benedictines think (with Hallam) that the eighth century was, on the whole, the darkest on the Continent, though England attained its lowest point somewhat later. Of the great protectors of learning Theodoric was unable to write (see Guignée, tome 1, p. 31), and Charlemagne (Eginhard) only began to learn when advanced in life, and was never quite able to master the accomplishment. Alfred, however, was distinguished in literature.

⁴ The belief that the world was just about to end was, as is well known, very general among the early Christians, and greatly affected their lives. It appears in the New Testament, and very clearly in the epistle ascribed to Barnabas in the first century. The persecutions of the second and third centuries revived it, and both Tertullian and Cyprian (in *Demetrianum*) strongly assert it. With the triumph of Christianity the appre-

some monks, when they were under the discipline of silence, and desired to ask for Virgil, Horace, or any other Gentile work, to indicate their wish by scratching their ears like a dog, to which animal it was thought the pagans might be reasonably compared.¹ The monasteries contained it is said, during some time, the only libraries in Europe, and were, therefore, the sole receptacles of the pagan manuscripts; but we cannot infer from this that, if the monasteries had not existed, similar libraries would not have been called into being in their place. To the occasional industry of the monks in copying the works of antiquity we must oppose the industry they displayed, though chiefly at a somewhat later period, in scraping the ancient parchments, in order that, having obliterated the writing of the pagans, they might cover them with their own legends.²

There are some aspects, however, in which the monastic period of literature appears eminently beautiful. The fretfulness and impatience and extreme tension of modern literary life, the many anxieties that paralyse, and the feverish craving for applause that perverts, so many noble intellects, were then unknown. Severed from all the cares of active life in the deep calm of the monastery, where the turmoil of the outer world could never come, the monkish scholar pursued his studies in a spirit which has now almost faded from the world. No doubt had ever disturbed his mind. To him the problem of the universe seemed solved. Expatiating for ever with unfaltering faith upon the unseen world, he had learnt to live for it alone. His hopes were not fixed upon human greatness or fame, but upon the pardon of his sins and the rewards of a happier world. A crowd of quaint and often beautiful legends

illustrate the deep union that subsisted between literature and religion. It is related of Cædmon, the first great poet of the Anglo-Saxons, that he found in the secular life no vent for his hidden genius. When the warriors, assembled at their banquets, sang in turn the praises of war or beauty, as the instrument passed to him, he rose and went out with a sad heart, for he alone was unable to weave his thoughts in verse. Wearied and desponding, he lay down to rest, when a figure appeared to him in his dream and commanded him to sing the Creation of the World. A transport of religious fervour thrilled his brain, his imprisoned intellect was unlocked, and he soon became the foremost poet of his land.³ A Spanish boy, having long tried in vain to master his task, and driven to despair by the severity of his teacher, ran away from his father's home. Tired with wandering and full of anxious thoughts, he sat down to rest by the margin of a well, when his eye was caught by the deep furrow in the stone. He asked a girl who was drawing water to explain it, and she told him that it had been worn by the constant attrition of the rope. The poor boy, who was already full of remorse for what he had done, recognised in the reply a Divine intimation. "If," he thought, "by daily use the soft rope could thus penetrate the hard stone, surely along perseverance could overcome the dullness of my brain." He returned to his father's house; he laboured with redoubled earnestness, and he lived to be the great St. Isidore of Spain.⁴ A monk who had led a vicious life was saved, it is said, from hell because it was found that his sins, though very numerous, were just outnumbered by the letters of a ponderous and devout book he had written.⁵ The Holy Spirit, in the shape of a dove, had been seen to inspire St. Gregory; and the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, and of several other theologians, had been expressly applauded by Christ or by his saints. When, twenty years after death, the tomb of a certain monkish writer was opened, it was found that, although the

hension for a time subsided; but it reappeared with great force when the dissolution of the Empire was manifestly impending, when it was accomplished, and in the prolonged anarchy and suffering that ensued, Gregory or Tours, writing in the latter part of the sixth century, speaks of it as a very prevalent (*Prologue to the First Book*), and St. Gregory the Great, about the same time, constantly expresses it. The panic that filled Europe at the end of the tenth century has been often described.

¹ Maitland's *Dark Ages*, p. 403.

² This passion for scraping MSS. became common, according to Montfaucon, after the twelfth century (Maitland, p. 40.) According to Hallam, however (*Middle Ages*, ch. ix. part i.), it must have begun earlier, being chiefly caused by the cessation or great diminution of the supply of Egyptian papyrus, in consequence of the capture of Alexandria by the Saracens, early in the seventh century.

³ Bede, *H. E.* iv. 24.

⁴ Mariana, *De Rebus Hispaniæ*, vi. 7. Mariana says the stone was in his time preserved as a relic.

⁵ Odericus Vitalis, quoted by Maitland (*Dark Ages*, pp. 268-269). The monk was restored to life that he might have an opportunity of reformation. The escape was a narrow one, for there was only one letter against which no sin could be adduced—a remarkable instance of the advantages of a diffuse style.

remainder of the body had crumbled into dust, the hand that had held the pen remained flexible and undecayed.¹ A young and nameless scholar was once buried near a convent at Bonn. The night after his funeral, a nun whose cell overlooked the cemetery was awakened by a brilliant light that filled the room. She started up, imagining that the day had dawned; but, on looking out, she found that it was still night, though a dazzling splendour was around. A female form of matchless loveliness was bending over the scholar's grave. The effluence of her beauty filled the air with light, and she clasped to her heart a snow-white dove that rose to meet her from the tomb. It was the Mother of God come to receive the soul of the martyred scholar; "for scholars, too," adds the old chronicler, "are martyrs if they live in purity and labour with courage."²

But legends of this kind, though not without a very real beauty, must not blind us to the fact that the period of Catholic ascendancy was, on the whole, one of the most deplorable in the history of the human mind. The energies of Christendom were diverted from all useful and progressive studies, and were wholly expended on theological disquisitions. A crowd of superstitions, attributed to infallible wisdom, barred the path of knowledge, and the charge of magic, or the charge of heresy, crushed every bold inquiry in the sphere of physical nature or of opinions. Above all, the conditions of true inquiry had been cursed by the Church. A blind, unquestioning credulity was inculcated as the first of duties, and the habit of doubt, the impartiality of a suspended judgment, the desire to hear both sides of a disputed question, and to emancipate the judgment from unreasoning prejudice, were all in consequence condemned. The belief in the guilt of error and doubt became universal, and that belief may be confidently pronounced to be the most pernicious superstition that has ever been accredited among mankind. Mistaken facts are rectified by inquiry. Mistaken methods of research, though far more inveterate, are gradually

altered; but the spirit that shrinks from inquiry as sinful, and deems a state of doubt a state of guilt, is the most enduring disease that can afflict the mind of man. Not till the education of Europe passed from the monasteries to the universities, not till Mohammedan science, and classical freethought, and industrial independence broke the sceptre of the Church, did the intellectual revival of Europe begin.

I am aware that so strong a statement of the intellectual darkness of the Middle Ages is likely to encounter opposition from many quarters. The blindness which the philosophers of the eighteenth century manifested to their better side has produced a reaction which has led many to an opposite, and, I believe, far more erroneous extreme. Some have become eulogists of the period through love of its distinctive theological doctrines, and others through archaeological enthusiasm; while a very pretentious and dogmatic, but, I think, sometimes superficial, school of writers, who loudly boast themselves the regenerators of history, and treat with supreme contempt all the varieties of theological opinion, are accustomed, partly through a very shallow historical optimism which scarcely admits the possibility of retrogression, and partly through sympathy with the despotic character of Catholicism, to extol the mediæval society in the most extravagant terms. Without entering into a lengthy examination of this subject, I may be permitted to indicate shortly two or three fallacies which are continually displayed in their appreciations.

It is an undoubted truth that, for a considerable period, almost all the knowledge of Europe was included in the monasteries, and from this it is continually inferred that, had these institutions not existed, knowledge would have been absolutely extinguished. But such a conclusion I conceive to be altogether untrue. During the period of the pagan Empire intellectual life had been diffused over a vast portion of the globe. Egypt and Asia Minor had become great centres of civilisation. Greece was still a land of learning. Spain, Gaul, and even Britain,³ were full of libraries and teachers. The schools of Narbonne, Arles, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Lyons, Mar-

¹ Digby, *Mores Catholici*, book x p. 246. Matthew of Westminster tells of a certain king who was very charitable, and whose right hand (which had assuaged many sorrows) remained undecayed after death (A.D. 644).

² See Hauréau, *Hist. de la Philosophie scolastique* tome I pp. 24-25.

³ On the progress of Roman civilisation in Britain see Tacitus, *Agricola*, xxi.

seilles, Poitiers, and Trèves were already famous. The Christian emperor Gratian, in A.D. 376, carried out in Gaul a system similar to that which had already, under the Antonines, been pursued in Italy, ordaining that teachers should be supported by the State in every leading city.¹ To suppose that Latin literature, having been so widely diffused, could have totally perished, or that all interest in it could have permanently ceased, even under the extremely unfavourable circumstances that followed the downfall of the Roman Empire and the Mohammedan invasions, is, I conceive, absurd. If Catholicism had never existed, the human mind would have sought other spheres for its development, and at least a part of the treasures of antiquity would have been preserved in other ways. The monasteries, as corporations of peaceful men protected from the incursions of the barbarians, became very naturally the reservoirs to which the streams of literature flowed; but much of what they are represented as creating they had in reality only attracted. The inviolable sanctity which they secured rendered them invaluable receptacles of ancient learning in a period of anarchy and perpetual war, and the industry of the monks in transcribing, probably more than counterbalanced their industry in effacing, the classical writings. The ecclesiastical unity of Christendom was also of extreme importance in rendering possible a general interchange of ideas. Whether these services outweighed the intellectual evils resulting from the complete diversion of the human mind from all secular learning, and from the persistent inculcation, as a matter of duty, of that habit of abject credulity which it is the first task of the intellectual reformer to eradicate, may be reasonably doubted.

It is not infrequent, again, to hear the preceding fallacy stated in a somewhat different form. We are reminded that almost all the men of genius during several centuries were great theologians, and we are asked to conceive the more than Egyptian darkness that would have prevailed had the Catholic theology which produced them not existed. This judgment resembles that of the prisoner in a famous passage of Cicero, who, having spent his entire life in a dark dungeon, and knowing the light of day only from a

single ray which passed through a fissure in the wall, inferred that if the wall were removed, as the fissure would no longer exist, all light would be excluded. Mediæval Catholicism discouraged and suppressed in every way secular studies, while it conferred a monopoly of wealth and honour and power upon the distinguished theologian. Very naturally, therefore, it attracted into the path of theology the genius that would have existed without it, but would under other circumstances have been displayed in other forms.

It is not to be inferred, however, from this that mediæval Catholicism had not, in the sphere of intellect, any real creative power. A great moral or religious enthusiasm always evoked a certain amount of genius that would not otherwise have existed, or at least been displayed; and the monasteries were peculiarly fitted to develop certain casts of mind, which in no other sphere could have so perfectly expanded. The great writings of St. Thomas Aquinas² and his followers, and, in more modern times, the massive and conscientious erudition of the Benedictines, will always make certain periods of the monastic history venerable to the scholar. But when we remember that during many centuries nearly everyone possessing any literary tastes or talents became a monk, when we recollect that these monks were familiar with the language, and might easily have been familiar with the noble literature, of ancient Rome, and when we also consider the mode of their life, which would seem, from its freedom from care, and from the very monotony of its routine, peculiarly calculated to impel them to study, we can hardly fail to wonder how very little of any real value they added, for so long a period, to the knowledge of mankind. It is indeed a remarkable fact that, even in the ages when the Catholic ascendancy was most perfect, some of the greatest achievements were either opposed or simply external to ecclesiastical influence. Roger Bacon, having been a monk, is frequently spoken of as a creature of Catholic teaching. But there never was a more striking instance of the force of a great genius in resisting the tendencies

¹ A biographer of St. Thomas Aquinas modestly observes: "L'opinion généralement répandue parmi les théologiens c'est que la *Somme de Théologie* de St. Thomas est non-seulement son chef-d'œuvre mais aussi celui de l'esprit humain." (11) (Carle, *Hist. de St. Thomas d'Aquin*, p. 140.)

² See the Benedictine *Hist. littér. de la France*, tome i. part ii. p. 9.

of his age. At a time when physical science was continually neglected, discouraged, or condemned, at a time when all the great prizes of the world were open to men who pursued a very different course, Bacon applied himself with transcendent genius to the study of nature. Fourteen years of his life were spent in prison, and when he died his name was blasted as a magician. The mediæval laboratories were chiefly due to the pursuit of alchemy, or to Mohammedan encouragement. The inventions of the mariner's compass, of gunpowder, and of rag paper were all, indeed, of extreme importance; but no part of the credit of them belongs to the monks. Their origin is involved in much obscurity, but it is almost certain that the last two, at all events, were first employed in Europe by the Mohammedans of Spain. Cotton paper was in use among these as early as 1009. Among the Christian nations it appears to have been unknown until late in the thirteenth century. The first instance of the employment of artillery among Christian nations was at the Battle of Crécy, but the knowledge of gunpowder among them has been traced back as far as 1338. There is abundant evidence, however, of its employment in Spain by Mohammedans in several sieges in the thirteenth century, and even in a battle between the Moors of Seville and those of Tunis at the end of the eleventh century.¹ In invention, indeed, as well as in original research, the mediæval monasteries were singularly barren. They cultivated formal logic to great perfection. They produced many patient and laborious, though, for the most part, wholly uncritical scholars, and many philosophers who, having assumed their premises with unfaltering faith, reasoned from them with admirable subtlety; but they taught men to regard the sacrifice of secular learning as a noble thing; they impressed upon them a theory of the habitual government of the universe, which is absolutely untrue; and they diffused, wherever their influence extended, habits of credulity and intolerance that are the most deadly poisons to the human mind.

It is, again, very frequently observed

among the more philosophic eulogists of the mediæval period that, although the Catholic Church is a trammel and an obstacle to the progress of civilised nations, although it would be scarcely possible to exaggerate the misery her persecuting spirit caused, when the human mind had outstripped her teaching; yet there was a time when she was greatly in advance of the age, and the complete and absolute ascendancy she then exercised was intellectually eminently beneficial. That there is much truth in this view I have myself repeatedly maintained. But when men proceed to isolate the former period, and to make it the theme of unqualified eulogy, they fall, I think, into a grave error. The evils that sprang from the later period of Catholic ascendancy were not an accident or a perversion, but a normal and necessary consequence of the previous despotism. The principles which were imposed on the mediæval world, and which were the conditions of so much of its distinctive excellence, were of such a nature that they claimed to be final, and could not possibly be discarded without a struggle and a convulsion. We must estimate the influence of these principles considered as a whole and during the entire period of their operation. There are some poisons which, before they kill men, allay pain and diffuse a soothing sensation through the frame. We may recognise the hour of enjoyment they procure, but we must not separate it from the price at which it is purchased.

The extremely unfavourable influence the Catholic Church long exercised upon intellectual development had important moral consequences. Although moral progress does not necessarily depend upon intellectual progress, it is materially affected by it, intellectual activity being the most important element in the growth of that great and complex organism which we call civilisation. The mediæval credulity had also a more direct moral influence in producing that indifference to truth which is the most repulsive feature of so many Catholic writings. The very large part that must be assigned to deliberate forgeries in the early apologetic literature of the Church we have already seen; and no impartial reader can, I think, investigate the innumerable grotesque and lying legends that during the whole course of the Middle Ages were deliberately palmed upon mankind as

¹ See Viardot, *Hist. des Arabes en Espagne*, ii. 142-166. Prescott's *Ferdinand and Isabella*, ch. viii. Viardot contends that the compass—which appears to have been long known in China—was first introduced into Europe by the Mohammedans; but the evidence of this appears inconclusive.

undoubted facts, can follow the histories of the false decretals and the discussions that were connected with them, or can observe the complete and absolute incapacity most Catholic historians have displayed of conceiving any good thing in the ranks of their opponents, or of stating with common fairness any consideration that can tell against their cause, without acknowledging how serious and how inveterate has been the evil. There have no doubt been many noble individual exceptions. Yet it is, I believe, difficult to exaggerate the extent to which this moral defect exists in most of the ancient and very much of the modern literature of Catholicism. It is this which makes it so unspeakably repulsive to all independent and impartial thinkers, and has led a great German historian¹ to declare, with much bitterness, that the phrase "Christian veracity" deserves to rank with the phrase "Punic faith." But this absolute indifference to truth whenever falsehood could subserve the interests of the Church is perfectly explicable, and was found in multitudes who in other respects exhibited the noblest virtue. An age which has ceased to value impartiality of judgment will soon cease to value accuracy of statement; and when credulity is inculcated as a virtue falsehood will not long be stigmatised as a vice. When, too, men are firmly convinced that salvation can only be found within their Church, and that their Church can absolve from all guilt, they will speedily conclude that nothing can possibly be wrong which is beneficial to it. They exchange the love of truth for what they call the love of *the* truth. They regard morals as derived from, and subordinate to, theology, and they regulate all their statements not by the standard of veracity, but by the interests of their creed.

Another important moral consequence of the monastic system was the great prominence given to pecuniary compensations for crime. It had been at first one of the broad distinctions between paganism and Christianity that, while the rites of the former were for the most part unconnected with moral dispositions, Christianity made purity of heart an essential element of all its worship. Among the pagans a few faint efforts had, it is true, been made in this direction. An old precept or law, which is referred to by

Cicero, and which was strongly reiterated by Apollonius of Tyana and the Pythagoreans, declared that "no impious man should dare to appease the anger of the divinities by gifts;"¹ and oracles are said to have more than once proclaimed that the hecatombs of noble oxen with gilded horns that were offered up ostentatiously by the rich were less pleasing to the gods than the wreaths of flowers and the modest and reverential worship of the poor.² In general, however, in the pagan world, the service of the temple had little or no connection with morals; and the change which Christianity effected in this respect was one of its most important benefits to mankind. It was natural, however, and perhaps inevitable, that in the course of time, and under the action of very various causes, the old pagan sentiment should revive, and even with an increased intensity. In no respect had the Christians been more nobly distinguished than by their charity. It was not surprising that the Fathers, while exerting all their eloquence to stimulate this virtue—especially during the calamities that accompanied the dissolution of the Empire—should have dilated in extremely strong terms upon the spiritual benefits the donor would receive for his gift. It is also not surprising that this selfish calculation should gradually, and among hard and ignorant men, have absorbed all other motives. A curious legend, which is related by a writer of the seventh century, illustrates the kind of feeling that had arisen. The Christian bishop Synesius succeeded in converting a pagan named Evagrius, who for a long time, however, felt doubts about the passage "He who giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord." On his conversion, and in obedience to this verse, he gave Synesius three hundred pieces of gold to be distributed among the poor; but he exacted from the bishop, as the representative of Christ, a promissory note engaging that he should be repaid in the future world. Many years later Evagrius, being on his death-bed, commanded his sons, when they buried him, to place the note in his hand, and to do so without informing Synesius. His dying injunction was observed, and three days afterwards he

¹ "Impius ne audeto placare donis iram Deorum." (Cicero, *De Leg.* ii. 9.) See, too, Philost. *Apoll. Tyana.* i. ii.

² There are three or four instances of this related by Porphyry, *De Abst.* *Carnis*, lib. ii.

¹ Herder.

appeared to Synesius in a dream, told him that the debt had been paid, and ordered him to go to the tomb, where he would find a written receipt. Synesius did as he was commanded, and, the grave being opened, the promissory note was found in the hand of the dead man, with an endorsement declaring that the debt had been paid by Christ. The note, it was said, was long after preserved as a relic in the church of Cyrene.¹

The kind of feeling which this legend displays was soon turned with tenfold force into the channel of monastic life. A law of Constantine accorded, and several later laws enlarged, the power of bequests to ecclesiastics. Ecclesiastical property was at the same time exonerated from the public burdens; and this measure not only directly assisted its increase, but had also an important indirect influence, for when taxation was heavy many laymen ceded the ownership of their estates to the monasteries, with a secret condition that they should, as vassals, receive the revenues unburdened by taxation, and subject only to a slight payment to the monks as to their feudal lords.² The monks were regarded as the trustees of the poor, and also as themselves typical poor; and all the promises that applied to those who gave to the poor applied, it was said, to the benefactors of the monasteries. The monastic chapel also contained the relics of saints or sacred images of miraculous power; and throngs of worshippers were attracted by the miracles, and desired to place themselves under the protection, of the saint. It is no exaggeration to say that to give money to the priests was for several centuries the first article of the moral code. Political minds may have felt the importance of aggrandising a pacific and industrious class in the centre of a disorganised society, and family affection may have predisposed many in

favour of institutions which contained at least one member of most families; but in the overwhelming majority of cases the motive was simple superstition. In seasons of sickness, of danger, of sorrow, or of remorse, whenever the fear or the conscience of the worshipper was awakened, he hastened to purchase with money the favour of a saint. Above all, in the hour of death, when the terrors of the future world loomed darkly upon his mind, he saw in a gift or legacy to the monks a sure means of effacing the most monstrous crimes and securing his ultimate happiness. A rich man was soon scarcely deemed a Christian if he did not leave a portion of his property to the Church; and the charters of innumerable monasteries in every part of Europe attest the vast tracts of land that were ceded by will to the monks, "for the benefit of the soul" of the testator.³

It has been observed by a great historian that we may trace three distinct phases in the early history of the Church. In the first period religion was a question of morals; in the second period, which culminated in the fifth century, it had become a question of orthodoxy; in the third period, which dates from the seventh century, it was a question of munificence to monasteries.⁴ The despotism of Catholicism and the ignorance that followed the barbarian invasions had repressed the struggles of heresy; and in the period of almost absolute darkness that continued from the sixth to the twelfth century, the theological ideal of unquestioning faith and of perfect unanimity was all but realised in the West. All the energy that in previous ages had been expended in combating heresy was now expended in acquiring wealth. The people compounded for the most atrocious crimes by gifts to shrines of those saints whose intercession was supposed to be unfailing. The monks, partly by the natural cessation of their old enthusiasm, partly by the absence of any hostile criticism of their acts, and partly too by the very

¹ Moschus, *Pratum Spirituale* (Rosweyde), cap. cxcv. M. Wallon quotes from the *Life of St. Jean l'Aumônier* an even stranger event which happened to St. Peter Telonearius. "Pour repousser les importunités des pauvres, il leur jeta des pierres. Un jour, n'en trouvant pas sous la main, il leur jeta un pain à la tête. Il tomba malade et eut une vision. Ses mérites étaient comptés: d'un côté étaient tous ses crimes, de l'autre ce pain jeté comme une insulte aux pauvres et accepté comme une aumône par Jésus-Christ." (*Hist. de l'Esclavage*, tome iii p. 397.)

I may mention here that the ancient Gauls were said to have been accustomed to lend money on the condition of its being repaid to the lender in the next life. (Val. Maximus, lib. i. cap. vi § 10.)

² Muratori, *Antich. Italiane*, diss. lxxvii.

³ See, on the causes of the wealth of the monasteries, two admirable dissertations by Muratori, *Antich. Italiane*, lxxvii., lxxviii., Hallam's *Middle Ages*, ch. vii. part i.

⁴ "Lors de l'établissement du christianisme la religion avoit essentiellement consisté dans l'enseignement moral; elle avoit exercé les cœurs et les âmes par la recherche de ce qui étoit vraiment beau, vraiment honnête. Au cinquième siècle on l'avoit surtout attachée à l'orthodoxie, au septième on l'avoit réduite à la bienfaisance envers les couvens." (Sismondi, *Hist. des Français*, tome ii. p. 50.)

wealth they had acquired, sank into gross and general immorality. The great majority of them had probably at no time been either saints actuated by a strong religious motive, nor yet diseased and despairing minds seeking a refuge from the world; they had been simply peasants, of no extraordinary devotion or sensitiveness, who preferred an ensured subsistence, with no care, little labour, a much higher social position than they could otherwise acquire, and the certainty, as they believed, of going to heaven, to the laborious and precarious existence of the serf, relieved, indeed, by the privilege of marriage, but exposed to military service, to extreme hardships, and to constant oppression. Very naturally, when they could do so with impunity, they broke their vows of chastity. Very naturally, too, they availed themselves to the full of the condition of affairs to draw as much wealth as possible into their community.¹ The belief in the approaching end of the world, especially at the close of the tenth century; the Crusades, which gave rise to a profitable traffic in the form of a pecuniary commutation of vows; and the Black Death, which produced a paroxysm of religious fanaticism, stimulated the movement. In the monkish chronicles the merits of sovereigns are almost exclusively judged by their bounty to the Church, and in some cases this is the sole part of their policy which has been preserved.²

There were, no doubt, a few redeeming points in this dark period. The Irish monks are said to have been honourably distinguished for their reluctance to accept the lavish donations of their admirers,³ and some missionary monasteries of a high order of excellence were scattered through Europe. A few legends, too, may be cited censuring the facility with which money acquired by crime was accepted as an atonement for crime.⁴ But

these cases were very rare, and the religious history of several centuries is little more than a history of the rapacity of priests and of the credulity of laymen. In England the perpetual demands of the Pope excited a fierce resentment; and we may trace with remarkable clearness in every page of Matthew Paris the alienation of sympathy arising from this cause, which prepared and foreshadowed the final rupture of England from the Church. Ireland, on the other hand, had been given over by two Popes to the English invader, on the condition of the payment of Peter's pence. The outrageous and notorious immorality of the monasteries during the century before the Reformation was chiefly due to their great wealth; and that immorality, as the writings of Erasmus and Ulrich von Hutten show, gave a powerful impulse to the new movement, while the abuses of the indulgences were the immediate cause of the revolt of Luther. But these things arrived only after many centuries of successful fraud. The religious terrorism that was unscrupulously employed had done its work, and the chief riches of Christendom had passed into the coffers of the Church.

It is, indeed, probable that religious terrorism played a more important part in the monastic phase of Christianity than it had done even in the great work of the conversion of the pagans. Although two or three amiable theologians had made faint and altogether abortive attempts to question the eternity of punishment; although there had been some slight difference of opinion concerning the future of some pagan philosophers who had lived before the introduction of Christianity, and also upon the question whether infants who died unbaptised were only deprived of all joy or were actually subjected to never-ending agony,

tury, tells how, "when a certain bishop was consecrating a church built out of the fruits of usury and pillage, he saw behind the altar the devil in a pontifical vestment, standing at the bishop's throne, who said unto the bishop: 'Cease from consecrating the church; for it pertaneth to my jurisdiction, since it is built from the fruits of usuries and robberies.' Then, the bishop and the clergy having fled thence in fear, immediately the devil destroyed that church with a great noise." (*Rationale Divinorum*, i. 6; translated for the Camden Society.)

A certain St. Launomar is said to have refused a gift for his monastery from a rapacious noble, because he was sure it was derived from pillage (Montalembert's *Moyens d'Occident*, tome ii. pp. 350-351.) When prostitutes were converted in the early Church, it was the rule that the money of which they had become possessed should never be applied to ecclesiastical purposes, but should be distributed among the poor.

¹ Mr Hallam, speaking of the legends of the miracles of saints, says "It must not be supposed that these absurdities were produced as well as nourished by ignorance. In most cases they were the work of deliberate imposture. Every cathedral or monastery had its tutel'ar saint, and every saint his legend, fabricated in order to enrich the churches under his protection, by exaggerating his virtues, his miracles, and consequently his power of serving those who paid liberally for his patronage." (*Middle Ages*, ch. ix. part 1.) I do not think this passage makes sufficient allowance for the unconscious formation of many saintly myths, but no impartial person can doubt its substantial truth.

² Sismondi, *Hist. des Français*, tome ii. pp. 54, 62-63

³ Milman's *Hist. of Latin Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 257

⁴ Durandus, a French bishop of the thirteenth cen-

there was no question as to the main features of the Catholic doctrine. According to the Patristic theologians it was part of the gospel revelation that the misery and suffering the human race endures upon earth is but a feeble image of that which awaits it in the future world; that all its members beyond the Church, as well as a very large proportion of those who are within its pale, are doomed to an eternity of agony in a literal and undying fire. The monastic legends took up this doctrine, which in itself is sufficiently revolting, and they developed it with an appalling vividness and minuteness. St. Macarius, it is said, when walking one day through the desert, saw a skull upon the ground. He struck it with his staff, and it began to speak. It told him that it was the skull of a pagan priest who had lived before the introduction of Christianity into the world, and who had accordingly been doomed to hell. As high as the heaven is above the earth, so high does the fire of hell mount in waves above the souls that are plunged into it. The damned souls were pressed together back to back, and the lost priest made it his single entreaty to the saint that he would pray that they might be turned face to face, for he believed that the sight of a brother's face might afford him some faint consolation in the eternity of agony that was before him.¹ The story is well known of how St. Gregory, seeing on a bas-relief a representation of the goodness of Trajan to a poor widow, pitied the pagan emperor, whom he knew to be in hell, and prayed that he might be released. He was told that his prayer was altogether unprecedented; but at last, on his promising that he would never offer such a prayer again, it was partially granted. Trajan was not withdrawn from hell, but he was freed from the torments which the remainder of the pagan world endured.²

An entire literature of visions depicting the torments of hell was soon produced

by the industry of the monks. The apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, which purported to describe the descent of Christ into the lower world, contributed to foster it; and St. Gregory the Great has related many visions in a more famous work, which professed to be compiled with scrupulous veracity from the most authentic sources,³ and of which it may be confidently averred that it scarcely contains a single page which is not tainted with grotesque and deliberate falsehood. Men, it was said, passed into a trance or temporary death, and were then carried for a time to hell. Among others, a certain man, named Stephen, from whose lips the saint declares that he had heard the tale, had died by mistake. When his soul was borne to the gates of hell the Judge declared that it was another Stephen who was wanted; the disembodied spirit, after inspecting hell, was restored to its former body, and the next day it was known that another Stephen had died.⁴ Volcanoes were the portals of hell; and a hermit had seen the soul of the Arian Emperor Theodoric, as St. Eucherius afterwards did the soul of Charles Martel, carried down that in the Island of Lipari.⁵ The craters in Sicily, it was remarked, were continually agitated and continually increasing; and this, as St. Gregory observes, was probably due to the impending ruin of the world, when the great press of lost souls would render it necessary to enlarge the approaches to their prisons.⁶

But the glimpses of hell that are furnished in the *Dialogues* of St. Gregory appear meagre and unimaginative compared with those of some later monks. A long series of monastic visions, of which that of St. Fursey, in the seventh century, was one of the first, and which followed in rapid succession till that of Tundale, in the twelfth century, professed to describe with the most detailed accuracy the condition of the lost.⁷ It is

¹ *Verba Seniorum*, Prol § 172

² This vision is not related by St Gregory himself, and some Catholics are perplexed about it, on account of the vision of another saint, who afterwards asked whether Trajan was saved, and received for answer, "I wish men to rest in ignorance of this subject, that the Catholics may become stronger. For this emperor, though he had great virtues, was an unbaptised infidel." The whole subject of the vision of St. Gregory is discussed by Champagny, *Les Antonins*, tome i. pp. 372-373. This devout writer says, "Cette légende fut acceptée par tout le moyen-âge, indulgent pour les païens illustres et tout disposé à les supposer chrétiens et sauvés."

³ See the solemn asseveration of the care which he took in going only to the most credible and authorised sources for his materials, in the Preface to the First Book of *Dialogues*.

⁴ *Dial.* iv. 36

⁵ *Ibid.* iv. 30.

⁶ *Ibid.* iv. 35

⁷ The fullest collection of these visions with which I am acquainted is that made for the Philobiblion Society (vol. ix.), by M. Delepierre, called *L'Enfer, décrit par ceux qui l'ont vu*, of which I have largely availed myself. See, too, Rusca, *De Inferno*, Wright's *Purgatory of St. Patrick*, and an interesting collection of visions given by Mr. Longfellow, in his translation of Dante. The Irish saints were, I am sorry to say, prominent in producing this branch of literature. St. Fursey, whose vision is one of the earliest, and

impossible to conceive more ghastly, grotesque, and material conceptions of the future world than they evince, or more hideous calumnies against that Being who was supposed to inflict upon His creatures such unspeakable misery. The devil was represented bound by red-hot chains on a burning gridiron in the centre of hell. The screams of his never-ending agony made its rafters to resound; but his hands were free, and with these he seized the lost souls, crushed them like grapes against his teeth, and then drew them by his breath down the fiery cavern of his throat. Dæmons with hooks of red-hot iron plunged souls alternately into fire and ice. Some of the lost were hung up by their tongues, others were sawn asunder, others gnawed by serpents, others beaten together on an anvil and welded into a single mass, others boiled and then strained through a cloth, others twined in the embraces of dæmons whose limbs were of flame. The fire of earth, it was said, was but a picture of that of hell. The latter was so immeasurably more intense that it alone could be called real. Sulphur was mixed with it, partly to increase its heat and partly, too, in order that an insufferable stench might be added to the misery of the lost; while, unlike other flames, it emitted, according to some visions, no light, that the horror of darkness might be added to the horror of pain. A narrow bridge spanned the abyss, and from it the souls of sinners were plunged into the darkness that was below.¹

Such catalogues of horrors, though they now awake in an educated man a sentiment of mingled disgust, weariness, and contempt, were able for many centuries to create a degree of panic and of misery we can scarcely realise. With the exception of the heretic Pelagius, whose noble genius, anticipating the discoveries of modern science, had repudiated the theological notion of death having been introduced into the world on account of the act of Adam, it was universally held among Christians that all the forms

of suffering and dissolution that are manifested on earth were penal inflictions. The destruction of the world was generally believed to be at hand. The minds of men were filled with images of the approaching catastrophe, and innumerable legends of visible dæmons were industriously circulated. It was the custom then, as it is the custom now, for Catholic priests to stain the imaginations of young children by ghastly pictures of future misery, to imprint upon the virgin mind atrocious images which they hoped, not unreasonably, might prove indelible.² In hours of weakness and of sickness their overwrought fancy seemed to see hideous beings hovering around, and hell itself yawning to receive its victim. St. Gregory describes how a monk who, though apparently a man of exemplary and even saintly piety, had been accustomed secretly to eat meat, saw on his deathbed a fearful dragon twining its tail round his body, and with open jaws sucking his breath;³ and how a little boy of five years old, who had learnt from his father to repeat blasphemous words, saw as he lay dying exulting dæmons who were waiting to carry him to hell.³ To

¹ Few Englishmen, I imagine, are aware of the infamous publications written with this object, that are circulated by the Catholic priests among the poor. I have before me a tract "for children and young persons," called *The Sight of Hell*, by the Rev. J. Furniss, C.S.S.R., published "permissu superiorum," by Duffy (Dublin and London). It is a detailed description of the dungeons of hell, and a few sentences may serve as a sample: "See! on the middle of that red-hot floor stands a girl; she looks about sixteen years old. Her feet are bare. She has neither shoes nor stockings. Listen! she speaks. She says, I have been standing on this red-hot floor for years. Day and night my only standing-place has been this red-hot floor. Look at my burnt and bleeding feet. Let me go off this burning floor for one moment, only for one single short moment. The fourth dungeon is the boiling kettle. In the middle of it there is a boy. . . His eyes are burning like two burning coals. Two long flames come out of his ears. Sometimes he opens his mouth, and blazing fire rolls out. But listen! there is a sound like a kettle boiling. The blood is boiling in the scalded veins of that boy. The brain is boiling and bubbling in his head. The marrow is boiling in his bones. The fifth dungeon is the red-hot oven. The little child is in this red-hot oven. Hear how it screams to come out. See how it turns and twists itself about in the fire. It beats its head against the roof of the oven. It stamps its little feet on the floor. . . God was very good to this child. Very likely God saw it would get worse and worse, and would never repent, and so it would have to be punished much more in hell. So God in His mercy called it out of the world in its early childhood." If the reader desires to follow this subject further, he may glance over a companion tract by the same reverend gentleman, called *A Terrible Judgment on a Little Child*; and also a book on *Hell*, translated from the Italian of Pinamonti, and with illustrations depicting the various tortures.

² St. Greg. *Dial.* iv. 38.

³ *Ibid.* iv. 18.

Tondale, or Tundale, whose vision is one of the most detailed, were both Irish. The English historians contain several of these visions. Bede relates two or three—William of Malmesbury that of Charles the Fat; Matthew Paris three visions of purgatory.

² The narrow bridge over hell (in some visions covered with spikes), which is a conspicuous feature in the Mohammedan pictures of the future world, appears very often in Catholic visions. See Greg. *Tur.* iv. 33; St. Greg. *Dial.* iv. 36; and the vision of Tundale, in Delepiere.

the jaundiced eye of the theologian all nature seemed stricken and forlorn, and its brightness and beauty suggested no ideas but those of deception and of sin. The redbreast, according to one popular legend, was commissioned by the Deity to carry a drop of water to the souls of unbaptised infants in hell, and its breast was singed in piercing the flames.* In the calm, still hour of evening, when the peasant boy asked why the sinking sun, as it dipped beneath the horizon, flushed with such a glorious red, he was answered, in the words of an old Saxon catechism, because it is then looking into hell.†

It is related in the vision of Tundale that as he gazed upon the burning plains of hell, and listened to the screams of ceaseless and hopeless agony that were wrung from the sufferers, the cry broke from his lips, "Alas, Lord! what truth is there in what I have so often heard—the earth is filled with the mercy of God?"‡ It is, indeed, one of the most curious things in moral history to observe how men who were sincerely indignant with pagan writers for attributing to their divinities the frailties of an occasional jealousy or an occasional sensuality—for representing them, in a word, like men of mingled characters and passions—have nevertheless unscrupulously attributed to their own Divinity a degree of cruelty which may be confidently said to transcend the utmost barbarity of which human nature is capable. Neither Nero nor Phalaris could have looked complacently for ever on millions enduring the torture of fire—most of them because of a crime which was committed, not by themselves, but by their ancestors, or because they had adopted some mistaken conclusion on intricate questions of history or metaphysics.⁴ To those who do not

regard such teaching as true, it must appear without exception the most odious in the religious history of the world, subversive of the very foundations of morals, and well fitted to transform the man who at once realised it and accepted it with pleasure, into a monster of barbarity. Of the writers of the mediæval period, certainly one of the two or three most eminent was Peter Lombard, whose *Sentences*, though now, I believe, but little read, were for a long time the basis of all theological literature in Europe. More than four thousand theologians are said to have written commentaries upon them—among others Albert the Great, St. Bonaventura, and St. Thomas Aquinas. Nor is the work unworthy of its former reputation. Calm, clear, logical, subtle, and concise, the author professes to expound the whole system of Catholic theology and ethics, and to reveal the interdependence of their various parts. Having explained the position and the duties, he proceeds to examine the prospects, of man. He maintains that until the day of judgment the inhabitants of heaven and hell will continually see one another; but that, in the succeeding eternity, the inhabitants of heaven alone will see those

unrhetorical and unimpassioned chapters, deliberately enumerating the most atrocious acts of cruelty in human history, and maintaining that they are surpassed by the tortures inflicted by the Deity. A few instances will suffice. Certain persons "put rings of iron, stuck full of sharp points of needles, about their arms and feet, in such a manner as the prisoners could not move without wounding themselves; then they compassed them about with fire, to the end that, standing still, they might be burnt alive, and, if they stirred, the sharp points pierced their flesh. What, then, shall be the torment of the damned, where they shall burn eternally without dying, and without possibility of removing? Alexander, the son of Hyrcanus, caused eight hundred to be crucified, and while they were yet alive caused their wives and children to be murdered before their eyes, that so they might not die once, but many deaths. This rigour shall not be wanting in hell. Mezentius tied a living body to a dead until the putrefied exhalations of the dead had killed the living... What is this in respect of hell, when each body of the damned is more loathsome and unsavoury than a million of dead dogs? Bonaventura says, if one of the damned was brought into this world, it were sufficient to infect the whole earth.

We are amazed to think of the inhumanity of Phalaris, who roasted men alive in his brazen bull. That was a joy in respect of that tie of hell. This torment... comprises as many torments as the body of man has joints, sinews, arteries, &c., being caused by that penetrating and real fire, of which this temporal fire is but a painted fire. What comparison will there be between burning for a hundred years' space, and to be burning without interruption as long as God is God?" (*Contemplations on the State of Man*, book II. chs. 6-7, in Heber's edition of the works of Taylor.)

⁵ Perrone, *Historia Theologia cum Philosophia comparata Synopsis*, p. 29. Peter Lombard's work was published in A.D. 1160.

* Alger's *History of the Doctrine of a Future Life* (New York, 1866), p. 414. The ignis fatuus was sometimes supposed to be the soul of an unbaptised child. There is, I believe, another Catholic legend about the redbreast, of a very different kind—that its breast was stained with blood when it was trying to pull out the thorns from the crown of Christ.

† Wright's *Purgatory of St. Patrick*, p. 26. M. Delepiere quotes a curious theory of Father Hardouin (who is chiefly known for his suggestion that the classics were composed by the mediæval monks) that the rotation of the earth is caused by the lost souls trying to escape from the fire that is at the centre of the globe, climbing, in consequence, on the inner crust of the earth, which is the wall of hell, and thus making the whole revolve, as the squirrel by climbing turns its cage! (*L'Enfer décrit par ceux qui l'ont vu*, p. 151.)

‡ Delepiere, p. 70.

⁴ Thus, in a book which was attributed (it is said erroneously) to Jeremy Taylor, we find two singularly

of the opposite world; and he concludes his great work by this most impressive passage. "In the last place, we must enquire whether the sight of the punishment of the condemned will impair the glory of the blest, or whether it will augment their beatitude. Concerning this, Gregory says the sight of the punishment of the lost will not obscure the beatitude of the just; for when it is accompanied by no compassion it can be no diminution of happiness. And although their own joys might suffice to the just, yet to their greater glory they will see the pains of the evil, which by grace they have escaped..... The elect will go forth, not indeed locally, but by intelligence, and by a clear vision, to behold the torture of the impious, and as they see them they will not grieve. Their minds will be sated with joy as they gaze on the unspeakable anguish of the impious, returning thanks for their own freedom. Thus Esaias, describing the torments of the impious and the joy of the righteous in witnessing it, says: 'The elect in truth will go out and will see the corpses of men who have prevaricated against Him; their worm will not die, and they will be to the satiety of vision to all flesh, that is to the elect. The just man will rejoice when he shall see the vengeance.'"¹

This passion for visions of heaven and hell was, in fact, a natural continuation of the passion for dogmatic definition which had raged during the fifth century. It was natural that men, whose curiosity had left no conceivable question of theology undefined, should have endeavoured to describe with corresponding precision the condition of the dead. Much, however, was due to the hallucinations of

solitary and ascetic life, and much more to deliberate imposture. It is impossible for men to continue long in a condition of extreme panic, and superstition speedily discovered remedies to allay the fears it had created. If a malicious dæmon was hovering around the believer, and if the jaws of hell were opening to receive him, he was defended, on the other hand, by countless angels; a lavish gift to a church or monastery could always enlist a saint in his behalf, and priestly power could protect him against the dangers which priestly sagacity had revealed. When the angels were weighing the good and evil deeds of a dead man, the latter were found by far to preponderate; but a priest of St. Lawrence came in, and turned the scale by throwing down among the former a heavy gold chalice, which the deceased had given to the altar.² Dagobert was snatched from the very arms of dæmons by St. Denis, St. Maurice, and St. Martin.³ Charlemagne was saved because the monasteries he had built outweighed his evil deeds.⁴ Others, who died in mortal sin, were raised from the dead at the desire of their patron saint, to expiate their guilt. To amass relics, to acquire the patronage of saints, to endow monasteries, to build churches, became the chief part of religion, and the more the terrors of the unseen world were unfolded, the more men sought tranquillity by the consolations of superstition.⁵

The extent to which the custom of materialising religion was carried can only be adequately realised by those who have examined the mediæval literature itself. That which strikes a student in perusing this literature is not so much the existence of these superstitions as their extraordinary multiplication, the many thousands of grotesque miracles wrought by saints, monasteries, or relics, that were deliberately asserted and universally believed. Christianity had assumed

¹ "Postremo quæritur, An pœna reprobtorum visa decoloret gloriam beatorum? an eorum beatitudini proficiat? De hoc ita Gregorius ait, Apud animum iustorum non obfuscat beatitudinem aspecta pœna reprobtorum; quia ubi jam compassio miserie non erit, minuire beatorum lætitiarum non valebit. Et licet iustus sua gaudia sufficiant, ad maiorem gloriam vident pœnas malorum quas per gratiam evaserunt. Egre diantur ergo electi, non loco, sed intelligentia vel visione manifesta ad videndum impiorum cruciatus; quos videntes non dolore afflictiuntur sed lætitia satiantur, agentes gratias de sua liberatione visa impiorum ineffabili calamitate. Unde Esaias impiorum tormenta describens et ex eorum visione lætitiarum bonorum exprimens, ait, Egre diantur electi scilicet et videbunt cadavera virorum qui prævaricati sunt in me. Verum eorum non morietur et ignis non extinguetur, et erunt usque ad satietatem visionis omni carni, id est electis. Lætabitur iustus cum viderit vindictam" (Peter Lombard, *Senien.* lib. iv. finis). These amiable views have often been expressed both by Catholic and by Puritan divines. See Alger's *Doctrine of a Future Life*, p. 541.

² *Legenda Aurea*. There is a curious fresco representing this transaction on the portal of the church of St. Lorenzo, near Rome.

³ Aimoin, *De Gestis Francorum Hist.* iv. 34.

⁴ Turpin's *Chronicle*, ch. 32. In the vision of Watlin, however (A.D. 824), Charlemagne was seen tortured in purgatory on account of his excessive love of women. (Delepiere, *L'Enfer décrit par ceux qui l'ont vu*, pp. 27-28.)

⁵ As the Abbé Mabry observes: "On croyoit en quelque sorte dans ces siècles grossiers que l'avance étoit le premier attribut de Dieu, et que les saints faisoient un commerce de leur crédit et de leur protection. De-là les richesses immenses données aux églises par des hommes dont les mœurs déshonoroient la religion." (*Observations sur l'Hist. de France*, i. 4.)

a form that was quite as polytheistic and quite as idolatrous as the ancient paganism. The low level of intellectual cultivation, the religious feelings of half-converted barbarians, the interests of the clergy, the great social importance of the monasteries, and perhaps also the custom of compounding for nearly all crimes by pecuniary fines, which was so general in the penal system of the barbarian tribes, combined in their different ways with the panic created by the fear of hell in driving men in the same direction, and the wealth and power of the clergy rose to a point that enabled them to overshadow all other classes. They had found, as has been well said, in another world the standing-point of Archimedes, from which they could move this. No other system had ever appeared so admirably fitted to endure for ever. The Church had crushed or silenced every opponent in Christendom. It had an absolute control over education in all its branches and in all its stages. It had absorbed all the speculative knowledge and art of Europe. It possessed or commanded wealth, rank, and military power. It had so directed its teaching that everything which terrified or distressed mankind drove men speedily into its arms, and it had covered Europe with a vast network of institutions admirably adapted to extend and perpetuate its power. In addition to all this it had guarded with consummate skill all the approaches to its citadel. Every doubt was branded as a sin, and a long course of doubt must necessarily have preceded the rejection of its tenets. All the avenues of enquiry were painted with images of appalling suffering and of malicious dæmons. No sooner did the worshipper begin to question any article of faith, or to lose his confidence in the virtue of the ceremonies of his Church, than he was threatened with a doom that no human heroism could brave, that no imagination could contemplate undismayed.

Of all the suffering that was undergone by those brave men who in ages of ignorance and superstition dared to break loose from the trammels of their Church, and who laid the foundation of the liberty we now enjoy, it is this which was probably the most poignant, and which is the least realised. Our imaginations can reproduce with much vividness gigantic massacres like those of the Albigenses or of St. Bartholomew. We can conceive,

too, the tortures of the rack and of the boots, the dungeon, the scaffold, and the slow fire. We can estimate, though less perfectly, the anguish which the bold enquirer must have undergone from the desertion of those he most dearly loved, from the hatred of mankind, from the malignant calumnies that were heaped upon his name. But in the chamber of his own soul, in the hours of his solitary meditation, he must have found elements of a suffering that was still more acute. Taught from his earliest childhood to regard the abandonment of his hereditary opinions as the most deadly of crimes, and to ascribe it to the instigation of deceiving dæmons, persuaded that if he died in a condition of doubt he must pass into a state of everlasting torture, his imagination saturated with images of the most hideous and appalling anguish, he found himself alone in the world, struggling with his difficulties and his doubts. There existed no rival sect in which he could take refuge, and where, in the professed agreement of many minds, he could forget the anathemas of the Church. Physical science, which has disproved the theological theories which attribute death to human sin, and suffering to Divine vengeance, and all natural phenomena to isolated acts of Divine intervention—historical criticism, which has dispelled so many imposing fabrics of belief, traced so many elaborate superstitions to the normal action of the undisciplined imagination, and explained and defined the successive phases of religious progress—were both unknown. Every comet that blazed in the sky, every pestilence that swept over the land, appeared a confirmation of the dark threats of the theologian. A spirit of blind and abject credulity, inculcated as the first of duties, and exhibited on all subjects and in all forms, pervaded the atmosphere he breathed. Who can estimate aright the obstacles against which a sincere enquirer in such an age must have struggled? Who can conceive the secret anguish he must have endured in the long months or years during which rival arguments gained an alternate sway over his judgment, while all doubt was still regarded as damnable? And, even when his mind was convinced, his imagination would still often revert to his old belief. Our thoughts in after years flow spontaneously, and even unconsciously, in the channels that are formed in youth. In

moments when the controlling judgment has relaxed its grasp, old intellectual habits reassume their sway, and images painted on the imagination will live when the intellectual propositions on which they have rested have been wholly abandoned. In hours of weakness, of sickness, and of drowsiness, in the feverish and anxious moments that are known to all, when the mind floats passively upon the stream, the phantoms which reason had exorcised must have often reappeared, and the bitterness of an ancient tyranny must have entered into his soul.

It is one of the greatest of the many services that were rendered to mankind by the Troubadours that they cast such a flood of ridicule upon the visions of hell, by which the monks had been accustomed to terrify mankind, that they completely discredited and almost suppressed them.¹ Whether, however, the Catholic mind, if unassisted by the literature of paganism and by the independent thinkers who grew up under the shelter of Mohammedanism, could have ever unwound the chains that had bound it, may well be questioned. The growth of towns, which multiplied secular interests and feelings, the revival of learning, the depression of the ecclesiastical classes that followed the Crusades, and at last the dislocation of Christendom by the Reformation, gradually impaired the ecclesiastical doctrine, which ceased to be realised before it ceased to be believed. There was, however, another doctrine which exercised a still greater influence in augmenting the riches of the clergy, and in making donations to the Church the chief part of religion. I allude, of course, to the doctrine of purgatory.

A distinguished modern apologist for the Middle Ages has made this doctrine the object of his special and very characteristic eulogy, because, as he says, by providing a finite punishment graduated to every variety of guilt, and adapted for those who, without being sufficiently virtuous to pass at once into heaven, did not appear sufficiently vicious to pass into hell, it formed an indispensable corrective to the extreme terrorism of the doctrine of eternal punishment.² This is one of

those theories which, though exceedingly popular with a class of writers who are not without influence in our day, must appear, I think, almost grotesque to those who have examined the actual operation of the doctrine during the Middle Ages. According to the practical teaching of the Church, the expiatory powers at the disposal of its clergy were so great that those who died believing its doctrines, and fortified in their last hours by its rites, had no cause whatever to dread the terrors of hell. On the other hand, those who died external to the Church had no prospect of entering into purgatory. This latter was designed altogether for true believers; it was chiefly preached at a time when no one was in the least disposed to question the powers of the Church to absolve any crime, however heinous, or to free the worst men from hell, and it was assuredly never regarded in the light of a consolation. Indeed, the popular pictures of purgatory were so terrific that it may be doubted whether the imagination could ever fully realise, though the reason could easily recognise, the difference between this state and that of the lost. The fire of purgatory, according to the most eminent theologians, was like the fire of hell—a literal fire, prolonged, it was sometimes said, for ages. The declamations of the pulpit described the sufferings of the saved souls in purgatory as incalculably greater than any that were endured by the most wretched mortals upon earth.³

¹ "Saint-Bernard, dans son sermon *De obitu Humberti*, affirme que tous les tourments de cette vie sont joies si on les compare à une seconde des peines du purgatoire. 'Imaginez-vous donc, délicates dames,' dit le père Valladier (1673) dans son sermon du troisième dimanche de l'Avent, 'd'estre au travers de vos chenets, sur votre petit feu pour une centaine d'ans: ce n'est rien au respect d'un moment de purgatoire. Mais si vous vistes jamais tirer quelqu'un à quatre chevaux, quel qu'un bruler à petit feu, enragé de faim ou de soif, une heure de purgatoire est pire que tout cela.'" (Meray, *Les Livres Prêcheurs*, Paris, 1860, pp. 130-131; an extremely curious and suggestive book.) I now take up the first contemporary book of popular Catholic devotion on this subject which is at hand, and read: "Compared with the pains of purgatory, then, all those wounds and dark prisons, all those wild beasts, hooks of iron, red-hot plates, &c., which the holy martyrs suffered, are nothing." "They (souls in purgatory) are in a real, though miraculous manner, tortured by fire, which is of the same kind (says Bellarmine) as our element fire." "The Angelic Doctor affirms 'that the fire which torments the damned is like the fire which purges the elect.'" "What agony will not those holy souls suffer when tied and bound with the most tormenting chains of a living fire like to that of hell! and we, while able to make them free and happy, shall we stand like uninterested spectators?" "St. Austin is of opinion that the pain of a soul in purgatory during the time required to open and shut one's eye is more severe than what St. Lawrence

² Many curious examples of the way in which the Troubadours burlesqued the monkish visions of hell are given by Delepierre, p. 144 (Wright's *Purgatory* of 1854, *Patrick*, 47-52.)

³ Comte, *Philosophie Positive*, tome v. p. 269.

The rude artists of mediævalism exhausted their efforts in depicting the writhings of the dead in the flames that encircled them. Innumerable visions detailed with a ghastly minuteness the various kinds of torture they underwent;¹ and the monk, who described what he professed to have seen, usually ended by the characteristic moral that, could men only realise those sufferings, they would shrink from no sacrifice to rescue their friends from such a state. A special place, it was said, was reserved in purgatory for those who had been slow in paying their tithes.² St. Gregory tells a curious story of a man who was in other respects of admirable virtue, but who, in a contested election for the pope, supported the wrong candidate, and—without, as it would appear, in any degree refusing to obey the successful candidate when elected—continued secretly of opinion that the choice was an unwise one. He was accordingly placed for some time after death in boiling water.³ Whatever may be thought of its other aspects, it is impossible to avoid recognising in this teaching a masterly skill in the adaptation of means to ends, which almost rises to artistic beauty. A system which deputed its minister to go to the unhappy widow, in the first dark hour of her anguish and her desolation, to tell her that he who was dearer to her than all the world besides was now burning in a fire, and that he could only be relieved by a gift of money to the priests, was assuredly of its own kind not without an extraordinary merit.

If we attempt to realise the moral condition of the society of Western Europe in the period that elapsed between the downfall of the Roman Empire and Charlemagne, during which the religious transformations I have noticed chiefly arose, we shall be met by some formidable difficulties. In the first place, our materials

are very scanty. From the year A.D. 642, when the meagre chronicle of Fredegarius closes, to the biography of Charlemagne by Eginhard, a century later, there is an almost complete blank in trustworthy history, and we are reduced to a few scanty and very doubtful notices in the chronicles of monasteries, the lives of saints, and the decrees of Councils. All secular literature had almost disappeared, and the thought of posterity seems to have vanished from the world.⁴ Of the first half of the seventh century, however, and of the two centuries that preceded it, we have much information from Gregory of Tours and Fredegarius, whose tedious and repulsive pages illustrate with considerable clearness the conflict of races and the dislocation of governments that for centuries existed. In Italy the traditions and habits of the old Empire had in some degree reasserted their sway; but in Gaul the Church subsisted in the midst of barbarians, whose native vigour had never been emasculated by civilisation and refined by knowledge. The picture which Gregory of Tours gives us is that of a society which was almost absolutely anarchical. The mind is fatigued by the monotonous account of acts of violence and of fraud springing from no fixed policy, tending to no end, leaving no lasting impress upon the world.⁵ The two queens Frédégonde and Brunehaut rise conspicuous above other figures for their fierce and undaunted ambition, for the fascination they exercised over the

suffered on the gridiron", and much more to the same effect (*Purgatory Opened to the Pity of the Faithful*, Richardson, London).

¹ See Delepiere, Wriglit, and Alger.

² This appears from the vision of Thurill (Wright's *Purgatory of St. Patrick*, p. 42.) Brompton (*Chronicon*) tells of an English landlord who had refused to pay tithes. St. Augustine, having vainly reasoned with him, at last convinced him by a miracle. Before celebrating mass he ordered all excommunicated persons to leave the church, whereupon a corpse got out of a grave and walked away. The corpse, on being questioned, said it was the body of an ancient Briton who refused to pay tithes, and had in consequence been excommunicated and damned.

³ Greg. *Dial.* iv. 40.

⁴ As Sismondi says. "Pendant quatre-vingts ans tout au moins, il n'y eut pas un Franc qui songât à transmettre à la postérité la mémoire des événements contemporains, et pendant le même espace de temps il n'y eut pas un personnage puissant qui ne bâtit des temples pour la postérité la plus reculée." (*Hist. des Français*, tome ii. p. 46.)

⁵ Gibbon says of the period during which the Merovingian dynasty reigned, that "it would be difficult to find anywhere more vice or less virtue." Hallam reproduces this observation, and adds: "The facts of these times are of little other importance than as they impress on the mind a thorough notion of the extreme wickedness of almost every person concerned in them, and consequently of the state to which society was reduced." (*Hist. of the Middle Ages*, ch. i.) Dean Milman is equally unfavourable and emphatic in his judgment. "It is difficult to conceive a more dark and odious state of society than that of France under her Merovingian kings, the descendants of Clovis, as described by Gregory of Tours. In the conflict of barbarism with Roman Christianity, barbarism has introduced into Christianity all its ferocity with none of its generosity and magnanimity; its energy shows itself in atrocity of cruelty, and even of sensuality. Christianity has given to barbarism hardly more than its superstition and its hatred of heretics and unbelievers. Throughout, assassinations, parricides, and fratricides intermingle with adulteries and rapes." (*History of Latin Christianity*, vol. i. p. 365.)

minds of multitudes, and for the number and atrocity of their crimes. All classes seem to have been almost equally tainted with vice. We read of a bishop named Cautinus, who had to be carried, when intoxicated, by four men from the table,¹ who, upon the refusal of one of his priests to surrender some private property, deliberately ordered that priest to be buried alive; and who, when the victim, escaping by a happy chance from the sepulchre in which he had been immured, revealed the crime, received no greater punishment than a censure.² The worst sovereigns found flatterers or agents in ecclesiastics. Frédégonde deputed two clerks to murder Childebert,³ and another clerk to murder Brunehaut;⁴ she caused a bishop of Rouen to be assassinated at the altar—a bishop and an archdeacon being her accomplices;⁵ and she found in another bishop, named Egidius, one of her most devoted instruments and friends.⁶ The Pope, St. Gregory the Great, was an ardent flatterer of Brunehaut.⁷ Gundebald, having murdered his three brothers, was consoled by St. Avitus, the bishop of Vienne, who, without intimating the slightest disapprobation of the act, assured him that by removing his rivals he had been a providential agent in preserving the happiness of his people.⁸ The bishoprics were filled by men of notorious debauchery, or by grasping misers.⁹ The priests sometimes celebrated the sacred mysteries "gorged with food and dulled with wine."¹⁰ They had already begun to carry arms, and Gregory tells of two bishops of the sixth century who had killed many enemies with their own hands.¹¹ There was scarcely a reign that

was not marked by some atrocious domestic tragedy. There were few sovereigns who were not guilty of at least one deliberate murder. Never, perhaps, was the infliction of mutilation, and prolonged and agonising forms of death, more common. We read, among other atrocities, of a bishop being driven to a distant place of exile upon a bed of thorns;¹ of a king burning together his rebellious son, his daughter in-law, and their daughters;² of a queen condemning a daughter she had had by a former marriage to be drowned, lest her beauty should excite the passions of her husband;³ of another queen endeavouring to strangle her daughter with her own hands;⁴ of an abbot compelling a poor man to abandon his house, that he might commit adultery with his wife, and being murdered, together with his partner, in the act;⁵ of a prince who made it an habitual amusement to torture his slaves with fire, and who buried two of them alive, because they had married without his permission;⁶ of a bishop's wife who, besides other crimes, was accustomed to mutilate men and to torture women by applying red-hot irons to the most sensitive parts of their bodies;⁷ of great numbers who were deprived of their ears and noses, tortured through several days, and at last burnt alive or broken slowly on the wheel. Brunehaut, at the close of her long and in some respects great though guilty career, fell into the hands of Clotaire, and the old queen, having been subjected for three days to various kinds of torture, was led out on a camel for the derision of the army, and at last bound to the tail of a furious horse, and dashed to pieces in its course.⁸

And yet this age was, in a certain

¹ Greg. Tur. iv. 12. Gregory mentions (v. 41) another bishop who used to become so intoxicated as to be unable to stand; and St. Boniface, after describing the extreme sensuality of the clergy of his time, adds that there are some bishops "qui licet dicant se fornicarios vel adulteros non esse, sed sunt ebriosi et injuriosi," &c. (Ep. xlix.)

² Greg. Tur. iv. 12.
³ *Ibid.* v. 11. 29. She gave them knives with hollow grooves, filled with poison, in the blades.

⁴ *Ibid.* vii. 20. ⁵ *Ibid.* viii. 31-41. ⁶ *Ibid.* v. 19.
⁷ See his very curious correspondence with her. (Ep. vi. 5. 50. 59. 12. 11. 127; xi. 62-63.)

⁸ Avitus, Ep. v. He adds: "Minuebat regni felicitas numerum regum personarum."

⁹ See the emphatic testimony of St. Boniface in the eighth century: "Modo autem maxima ex parte per civitates episcopales sedes traditæ sunt laicis cupidis ad possidendum, vel adulteratis clericis, scortatoribus et publicis sæculariter ad perfrendum." (Epist. xlix "ad Zachariam.") The whole epistle contains an appalling picture of the clerical vices of the times.

¹⁰ More than one Council made decrees about this. See the *1^{re} de St. Léger*, by Dom Pitra, pp. 172-177.

¹¹ Greg. Tur. iv. 43. St. Boniface, at a much later

period (A.D. 742), talks of bishops "Qui pugnant in exercitu armati et effundunt propria manu sanguinem hominum" (Ep. xlix.)

¹ Greg. Tur. iv. 26. ² *Ibid.* iv. 20.
³ *Ibid.* iii. 26. ⁴ *Ibid.* ix. 34.

⁵ *Ibid.* vii. 19. Gregory says this story should warn clergy men not to meddle with the wives of other people, but "content themselves with those that they may possess without crime." The abbot had previously tried to seduce the husband within the precincts of the monastery, that he might murder him.

⁶ *Ibid.* v. 3.
⁷ *Ibid.* viii. 39. She was guilty of many other crimes, which the historian says "it is better to pass in silence." The bishop himself had been guilty of outrageous and violent tyranny. The marriage of ecclesiastics appears at this time to have been common in Gaul, though the best men commonly deserted their wives when they were ordained. Another bishop's wife (iv. 26) was notorious for her tyranny.

⁸ Fredigarius, xlii. The historian describes Clotaire as a perfect paragon of Christian graces.

sense, eminently religious. All literature had become sacred. Heresy of every kind was rapidly expiring. The priests and monks had acquired enormous power, and their wealth was inordinately increasing.¹ Several sovereigns voluntarily abandoned their thrones for the monastic life.² The seventh century, which, together with the eighth, forms the darkest period of the Dark Ages, is famous in the hagiology as having produced more saints than any other century, except that of the martyrs.³

The manner in which events were regarded by historians was also exceedingly characteristic. Our principal authority, Gregory of Tours, was a bishop of great eminence, and a man of the most genuine piety, and of very strong affections.⁴ He describes his work as a record "of the virtues of saints, and the disasters of nations";⁵ and the student who turns to his pages from those of the pagan historians is not more struck by the extreme prominence he gives to ecclesiastical events than by the uniform manner in which he views all secular events in their religious aspect, as governed and directed by a special Providence. Yet, in questions where the difference between orthodoxy and heterodoxy is concerned, his ethics sometimes exhibit the most singular distortion. Of this, probably the most impressive example is the manner in which he has described the career of Clovis, the great representative of orthodoxy.⁶ Having recounted the circumstances of his conversion, Gregory proceeds to tell us, with undisguised admiration, how that chieftain, as the first-fruits of his

doctrine, professed to be grieved at seeing that part of Gaul was held by an Arian sovereign; how he accordingly resolved to invade and appropriate that territory; how, with admirable piety, he commanded his soldiers to abstain from all devastations when traversing the territory of St. Martin; and how several miracles attested the Divine approbation of the expedition. The war—which is the first of the long series of professedly religious wars that have been undertaken by Christians—was fully successful, and Clovis proceeded to direct his ambition to new fields. In his expedition against the Arians he had found a faithful ally in his relative Sighebert, the old and infirm king of the Riparian Franks. Clovis now proceeded artfully to suggest to the son of Sighebert the advantages that son might obtain by his father's death. The hint was taken. Sighebert was murdered, and Clovis sent ambassadors to the patriarch, professing a warm friendship, but with secret orders on the first opportunity to kill him. This being done, and the kingdom being left entirely without a head, Clovis proceeded to Cologne, the capital of Sighebert; he assembled the people, professed with much solemnity his horror of the tragedies that had taken place, and his complete innocence of all connection with them;⁷ but suggested that, as they were now without a ruler, they should place themselves under his protection. The proposition was received with acclamation. The warriors elected him as their king, and thus, says the episcopal historian, "Clovis received the treasures and dominions of Sighebert, and added them to his own. Every day God caused his enemies to fall beneath his hand, and enlarged his kingdom, because he walked with a right heart before the Lord, and did the things that were pleasing in His sight."⁸ His ambition was, however, still unsated. He proceeded, in a succession of expeditions, to unite the whole of Gaul under his sceptre, invading, defeating, capturing, and slaying the lawful sovereigns, who were for the most part his own relations.

¹ "Au sixième siècle on compte 214 établissements religieux des Pyrénées à la Loire et des bouches du Rhône aux Vosges" (Ozanam, *Études germaniques*, tome ii. p. 93.) In the two following centuries the ecclesiastical wealth was enormously increased.

² Matthew of Westminster (A.D. 757) speaks of no less than eight Saxon kings having done this.

³ "Le septième siècle est celui, peut-être qui a donné le plus de saints au calendrier." (Sismondi, *Hist. de France*, tome ii. p. 50.) "Le plus beau titre du septième siècle à une réhabilitation c'est le nombre considérable de saints qu'il a produits. Aucun siècle n'a été ainsi glorifié sauf l'âge des martyrs dont Dieu s'est réservé de compter le nombre. Chaque année fournit sa moisson, chaque jour a sa gerbe. Si donc il plaît à Dieu et au Christ de répandre à pleines mains sur un siècle les splendeurs des saints, qu'importe que l'histoire et la gloire humaine en tiennent peu compte?" (Pitra, *Vie de St. Leger*, Introd. p. x-xi.) This learned and very credulous writer (who is now a cardinal) afterwards says that we have the record of more than eight hundred saints of the seventh century. (Introd. p. lxxx.)

⁴ See, e.g. the very touching passage about the death of his children, v. 35.

⁵ Lib. ii. Prologue.

⁶ Greg. Tur. ii. 27-43.

⁷ He observes how impossible it was that he could be guilty of shedding the blood of a relation. "Sed in his ego nequaquam conscius sum. Nec enim possum sanguinem parentum meorum effundere." (Greg. Tur. ii. 40.)

⁸ "Prosternebat enim quotidie Deus hostes ejus sub manu ipsius, et augebat regnum ejus eo quod ambularet recto corde coram eo, et faceret quæ placita erant in oculis ejus." (Greg. Tur. ii. 40.)

Having secured himself against dangers from without, by killing all his relations, with the exception of his wife and children, he is reported to have lamented before his courtiers his isolation, declaring that he had no relations remaining in the world to assist him in his adversity; but this speech, Gregory assures us, was a stratagem; for the king desired to discover whether any possible pretender to the throne had escaped his knowledge and his sword. Soon after he died, full of years and honours, and was buried in a cathedral which he had built.

Having recounted all these things with unmoved composure, Gregory of Tours requests his reader to permit him to pause to draw the moral of the history. It is the admirable manner in which Providence guides all things for the benefit of those whose opinions concerning the Trinity are strictly orthodox. Having briefly referred to Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, and David, all of whom are said to have intimated the correct doctrine on this subject, and all of whom were exceedingly prosperous, he passes to more modern times. "Arius, the impious founder of the impious sect, his entrails having fallen out, passed into the flames of hell; but Hilary, the blessed defender of the undivided Trinity, though exiled on that account, found his country in Paradise. The King Clovis, who confessed the Trinity, and by its assistance crushed the heretics, extended his dominions through all Gaul. Alaric, who denied the Trinity, was deprived of his kingdom and his subjects, and, what was far worse, was punished in the future world."¹

It would be easy to cite other, though perhaps not quite such striking, instances of the degree in which the moral judgments of this unhappy age were distorted by superstition.² Questions of orthodoxy, or questions of fasting, appeared to the

popular mind immeasurably more important than what we should now call the fundamental principles of right and wrong. A law of Charlemagne, and also a law of the Saxons, condemned to death anyone who ate meat in Lent,³ unless the priest was satisfied that it was a matter of absolute necessity. The moral enthusiasm of the age chiefly drove men to abandon their civic or domestic duties, to immerse themselves in monasteries, and to waste their strength by prolonged and extravagant maceration.⁴ Yet, in the midst of all this superstition, there can be no question that in some respects the religious agencies were operating for good. The monastic bodies that everywhere arose formed secure asylums for the multitudes who had been persecuted by their enemies, constituted an invaluable counterpoise to the rude military forces of the time, familiarised the imagination of men with religious types that could hardly fail in some degree to soften the character, and led the way in most forms of peaceful labour. When men, filled with admiration at the reports of the sanctity and the miracles of some illustrious saint, made pilgrimages to behold him, and found him attired in the rude garb of a peasant, with thick shoes, and with a scythe on his shoulder, superintending the labours of the farmers,⁵ or sitting in a small attic mending lamps,⁶ whatever other benefit they might derive from the interview, they could scarcely fail to return with an increased sense of the dignity of labour. It was probably at this time as much for the benefit of the world as of the Church that the ecclesiastical sanctuaries and estates should remain inviolate, and the numerous legends of Divine punishment having overtaken those who transgressed them,

¹ Canciani, *Leges Barbarorum*, vol. II. p. 64. Canciani notices that among the Poles the teeth of the offending persons were pulled out. The following passage, from Bodin, is, I think, very remarkable.

"Les loix et canons veulent qu'on pardonne aux hérétiques repentis (combien que les magistrats en quelques lieux par cy-devant, y ont eu tel esgard, que celui qui avoit mangé de la chair au Vendredi estoit bruslé tout vif, comme il fut faict en la ville d'Angers l'an mil cinq cens trente-neuf, s'il ne s'en repentait, et jacob qu'il se repentait si estoit-il pendu par compassion)." (*Démonomanie des Sorciers*, p. 216.)

² A long list of examples of extreme maceration, from lives of the saints of the seventh and eighth centuries, is given by Pitra, *Vie de St. Léger*, Introd. pp. cv.-cvi.

³ This was related of St. Equitius. (Greg. *Dialog.* i. 4.)

⁴ *Ibid.* i. 5. This saint was named Constantus.

⁵ A vast number of miracles of this kind are recorded. See, e.g., Greg. Tur. *De Miraculis*, i. 6: 66; *Hist.* iv

¹ Lib. III. Prologus. St. Avitus enumerates in glowing terms the Christian virtues of Clovis (*Ep.* xli), but, as this was in a letter addressed to the king himself, the eulogy may easily be explained.

² Thus Hallam says: "There are continual proofs of immorality in the monkish historians. In the history of Ramsey Abbey, one of our best documents for Anglo-Saxon times, we have an anecdote of a bishop who made a Danish nobleman drunk, that he might cheat him out of an estate, which is told with much approbation. Water de Hemmingford records, with excessive delight, the well-known story of the Jews who were persuaded by the captain of their vessel to walk on the sands at low water till the rising tide drowned them." (*Hallam's Middle Ages*, 12th ed., III. p. 306.)

attest the zeal with which the clergy sought to establish their inviolability. The great sanctity that was attached to holidays was also an important boon to the servile classes. The celebration of the first day of the week, in commemoration of the resurrection, and as a period of religious exercises, dates from the earliest age of the Church. The Christian festival was carefully distinguished from the Jewish Sabbath, with which it never appears to have been confounded till the close of the sixteenth century; but some Jewish converts, who considered the Jewish law to be still in force, observed both days. In general, however, the Christian festival alone was observed, and the Jewish Sabbatical obligation, as St. Paul most explicitly affirms, no longer rested upon the Christians. The grounds of the observance of Sunday were the manifest propriety and expediency of devoting a certain portion of time to devout exercises, the tradition which traced the sanctification of Sunday to apostolic times, and the right of the Church to appoint certain seasons to be kept holy by its members. When Christianity acquired an ascendancy in the Empire, its policy on this subject was manifested in one of the laws of Constantine, which, without making any direct reference to religious motives, ordered that, "on the day of the sun," no servile work should be performed except agriculture, which, being dependent on the weather, could not, it was thought, be reasonably postponed. Theodosius took a step further, and suppressed the public spectacles on that day. During the centuries that immediately followed the dissolution of the Roman Empire, the clergy devoted themselves with great and praiseworthy zeal to the suppression of labour both on Sundays and on the other leading Church holidays. More than one law was made forbidding all Sunday labour, and this prohibition was reiterated by Charlemagne in his Capitularies.¹ Several Councils made decrees on the subject,²

and several legends were circulated of men who had been afflicted miraculously with disease or with death for having been guilty of this sin.³ Although the moral side of religion was greatly degraded or forgotten, there was, as I have already intimated, one important exception. Charity was so interwoven with the superstitious parts of ecclesiastical teaching, that it continued to grow and flourish in the darkest period. Of the acts of Queen Bathilda, it is said, we know nothing except her donations to the monasteries, and the charity with which she purchased slaves and captives, and released them or converted them into monks.⁴ While many of the bishops were men of gross and scandalous vice, there were always some who laboured assiduously in the old episcopal vocation of protecting the oppressed, interceding for the captives, and opening their sanctuaries to the fugitives. St. Germanus, a bishop of Paris, near the close of the sixth century, was especially famous for his zeal in ransoming captives.⁵ The same he acquired was so great that prisoners are said to have called upon him to assist them in the interval between his death and his burial; and the body of the saint becoming miraculously heavy, it was found impossible to carry it to the grave till the captives had been released.⁶ In the midst of the complete eclipse of all secular learning, in the midst of a reign of ignorance, imposture, and credulity which cannot be paralleled in history, there grew up a vast legendary literature, clustering around the form of the ascetic; and the lives of the saints, among much that is grotesque, childish, and even immoral, contain some fragments of the

¹ Gregory of Tours enumerates some instances of this in his extravagant book *De Miraculis*, ii. 11; iv. 57; v. 7. One of these cases, however, was for having worked on the day of St. John the Baptist. Some other miracles of the same nature, taken, I believe, from English sources, are given in Hessey's *Sunday* (3rd edition), p. 321.

² Compare Pitra, *Vie de St. Léger*, p. 137. Sismondi, *Hist. des Français*, tome ii. pp. 62-63.

³ See a remarkable passage from his life, cited by Guizot, *Hist. de la Civilisation en France*, dix-septième leçon. The English historians contain several instances of the activity of charity in the darkest period. Alfred and Edward the Confessor were conspicuous for it. Ethelwulf is said to have provided, "for the good of his soul," that, till the day of judgment, one poor man in ten should be provided with meat, drink, and clothing. (*Asser's Life of Alfred*.) There was a popular legend that a poor man having in vain asked alms of some sailors, all the bread in their vessel was turned into stone (Roger of Wendover, A.D. 606.) See, too, another legend of charity in Matthew of Westminster, A.D. 611.

⁴ Greg. Tur. *H. v.* v. 2.

⁴⁹ Perhaps the most singular instance of the violation of the sanctity of the church was that by the nuns of a convent founded by St. Radegunda. They having broken into rebellion, four bishops, with their attendant clergy, went to compose the dispute, and, having failed, excommunicated the rebels, whereupon the nuns almost beat them to death in the church. (Greg. Tur. ix. 41.)

¹ See Canciani, *Leges Barbarorum*, vol. iii. pp. 19, 151.

² Much information about these measures is given by Dr. Hessey, in his *Bampton Lectures on Sunday*. See especially lect. 3. See, too, Moehler, *Le Christisme et l'Esclavage*, pp. 186-187.

purest and most touching religious poetry.*

But the chief title of the period we are considering, to the indulgence of posterity, lies in its missionary labours. The stream of missionaries which had at first flowed from Palestine and Italy began to flow from the West. The Irish monasteries furnished the earliest, and probably the most numerous, labourers in the field. A great portion of the north of England was converted by the Irish monks of Lindisfarne. The fame of St. Columbanus in Gaul, in Germany, and in Italy, for a time even balanced that of St. Benedict himself, and the school which he founded at Luxeuil became the great seminary for mediæval missionaries, while the monastery he planted at Bobbio continued to the present [nineteenth] century. The Irish missionary St. Gall gave his name to a portion of Switzerland he had converted, and a crowd of other Irish missionaries penetrated to the remotest forests of Germany. The movement which began with St. Columba in the middle of the sixth century was communicated to England and Gaul about a century later. Early in the eighth century it found a great leader in the Anglo-Saxon St. Boniface, who spread Christianity far and wide through Germany, and at once excited and disciplined an ardent enthusiasm which appears to have attracted all that was morally best in the Church. During about three centuries, and while Europe had sunk into the most extreme moral, intellectual, and political degradation, a constant stream of missionaries poured forth from the monasteries, who spread the knowledge of the Cross and the seeds of a future civilisation through every land, from Lombardy to Sweden.²

On the whole, however, it would be difficult to exaggerate the superstition and the vice of the period between the dissolution of the Empire and the reign of Charlemagne. But in the midst of the chaos the elements of a new society may be detected, and we may already observe in embryo the movement which ultimately

issued in the Crusades, the feudal system, and chivalry. It is exclusively with the moral aspect of this movement that the present work is concerned, and I shall endeavour, in the remainder of this chapter, to describe and explain its incipient stages. It consisted of two parts—a fusion of Christianity with the military spirit, and an increasing reverence for secular rank.

It had been an ancient maxim of the Greeks that no more acceptable gifts can be offered in the temples of the gods than the trophies won from an enemy in battle.³ Of this military religion Christianity had been at first the extreme negation. I have already had occasion to observe that it had been one of its earliest rules that no arms should be introduced within the Church, and that soldiers returning even from the most righteous war should not be admitted to communion until after a period of penance and purification. A powerful party, which counted among its leaders Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Lactantius, and Basil, maintained that all warfare was unlawful for those who had been converted; and this opinion had its martyr in the celebrated Maximilianus, who suffered death under Diocletian solely because, having been enrolled as a soldier, he declared that he was a Christian, and that therefore he could not fight. The extent to which this doctrine was disseminated has been suggested with much plausibility as one of the causes of the Diocletian persecution.⁴ It was the subject of one of the reproaches of Celsus; and Origen, in reply, frankly accepted the accusation that Christianity was incompatible with military service, though he maintained that the prayers of the Christians were more efficacious than the swords of the legions.⁵ At the same time there can be no question that many Christians, from a very early date, did enlist in the army, and that they were not cut off from the Church. The legend of the thundering legion, under Marcus Aurelius, whatever we may think of the pretended miracle, attested the fact, and it is expressly asserted by Tertullian.⁶ The first fury of the Diocletian persecution fell upon Christian soldiers, and by the time of Constantine the army appears to have become,

* M. Guizot has given several specimens of this (*Hist. de la Civilis. dix-septième leçon*).

² This portion of mediæval history has lately been well traced by Mr. Maclear, in his *History of Christian Missions in the Middle Ages* (1863). See, too, Montalembert's *Moines d'Occident*; Ozanam's *Études germaniques*. The original materials are to be found in Bede, and in the *Lives of the Saints*—especially that of St. Columba, by Adamnan. On the French missionaries see the Benedictine *Hist. lit. de la France*, tome iv. p. 5, and on the English missionaries Sharon Turner's *Hist. of England*, book x. ch. ii.

³ Dion Chrysostom, *Or. ii* (*De Regno*).

⁴ Gibbon, ch. xvi.

⁵ Origen, *Cels. lib. viii.*

⁶ "Navigamus et nos vobiscum et militamus." *Tert. Apol. xlii.* See, too, Grotius, *De Jure*, i. cap. ii.

in a great degree, Christian. A Council of Arles, under Constantine, condemned soldiers who, through religious motives, deserted their colours; and St. Augustine threw his great influence into the same scale. But even where the calling was not regarded as sinful, it was strongly discouraged. The ideal or type of supreme excellence conceived by the imagination of the pagan world, and to which all their purest moral enthusiasm naturally aspired, was the patriot and soldier. The ideal of the Catholic legends was the ascetic, whose first duty was to abandon all secular feelings and ties. In most family circles the conflict between the two principles appeared, and in the moral atmosphere of the fourth and fifth centuries it was almost certain that every young man who was animated by any pure or genuine enthusiasm would turn from the army to the monks. St. Martin, St. Ferreol, St. Tarrachus, and St. Victricius were among those who through religious motives abandoned the army.¹ When Ulphilas translated the Bible into Gothic he is said to have excepted the four books of Kings, through fear that they might encourage the martial disposition of the barbarians.²

The first influence that contributed to bring the military profession into friendly connection with religion was the received doctrine concerning the providential government of affairs. It was generally taught that all national catastrophes were penal inflictions, resulting, for the most part, from the vices or the religious errors of the leading men, and that temporal prosperity was the reward of orthodoxy and virtue. A great battle, on the issue of which the fortunes of a people or of a monarch depended, was therefore supposed to be the special occasion of providential interposition, and the hope of obtaining military success became one of the most frequent motives of conversion. The conversion of Constantine was professedly, and the conversion of Clovis was perhaps really, due to the persuasion that the Divine interposition had in a critical moment given them the victory; and I have already noticed how large a part must be assigned to this order of ideas in facilitating the progress of Christianity

among the barbarians. When a cross was said to have appeared miraculously to Constantine, with an inscription announcing the victory of the Milvian bridge; when the same holy sign, adorned with the sacred monogram, was carried in the forefront of the Roman armies; when the nails of the cross, which Helena had brought from Jerusalem, were converted by the emperor into a helmet, and into bits for his war-horse, it was evident that a great change was passing over the once pacific spirit of the Church.³

Many circumstances conspired to accelerate it. Northern tribes, who had been taught that the gates of the Walhalla were ever open to the warrior who presented himself stained with the blood of his vanquished enemies, were converted to Christianity; but they carried their old feelings into their new creed. The conflict of many races, and the paralysis of all government that followed the fall of the Empire, made force everywhere dominant, and petty wars incessant. The military obligations attached to the "benefices" which the sovereigns gave to their leading chiefs, connected the idea of military service with that of rank still more closely than it had been connected before, and rendered it doubly honourable in the eyes of men. Many bishops and abbots, partly from the turbulence of their times and characters, and partly, at a later period, from their position as great feudal lords, were accustomed to lead their followers in battle; and this custom, though prohibited by Charlemagne, may be traced to so late a period as the Battle of Agincourt.⁴

The stigma which Christianity had attached to war was thus gradually effaced. At the same time the Church remained, on the whole, a pacific influence. War was rather condoned than consecrated, and, whatever might be the case with a few isolated prelates, the Church did nothing to increase or encourage it. The transition from the almost Quaker tenets of the primitive Church to the essentially military Christianity of the Crusades was chiefly due to another cause—to the terrors and to the example of Mohammedanism.

This great religion, which so long rivalled the influence of Christianity, had

¹ See an admirable dissertation on the opinions of the early Christians about military service in Le Blant, *Inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule*, tome i. pp. 87-87. The subject is frequently referred to by Barbeyrac, *Morale des Pères*, and Grotius, *De Jure*, lib. i. cap. ii.

² Philostorgius, ii. 5.

³ See some excellent remarks on this change in Milman's *History of Christianity*, vol. ii. pp. 287-288.

⁴ Mably, *Observations sur l'Histoire de France*, i. 6; Hallam's *Middle Ages*, ch. ii. part ii.

indeed spread the deepest and most justifiable panic through Christendom. Without any of those aids to the imagination which pictures and images can furnish, without any elaborate sacerdotal organisation, preaching the purest monotheism among ignorant and barbarous men, and inculcating, on the whole, an extremely high and noble system of morals, it spread with a rapidity, and it acquired a hold over the minds of its votaries, which it is probable that no other religion has altogether equalled. It borrowed from Christianity that doctrine of salvation by belief which is perhaps the most powerful impulse that can be applied to the characters of masses of men, and it elaborated so minutely the charms of its sensual heaven, and the terrors of its material hell, as to cause the alternative to appeal with unrivalled force to the gross imaginations of the people. It possessed a book which, however inferior to that of the opposing religion, has nevertheless been the consolation and the support of millions in many ages. It taught a fatalism which in its first age nerved its adherents with a matchless military courage, and which, though in later days it has often paralysed their active energies, has also rarely failed to support them under the pressure of inevitable calamity. But, above all, it discovered the great, the fatal secret of uniting indissolubly the passion of the soldier with the passion of the devotee. Making the conquest of the infidel the first of duties, and proposing heaven as the certain reward of the valiant soldier, it created a blended enthusiasm that soon overpowered the divided counsels and the voluptuous governments of the East, and, within a century of the death of Mohammed, his followers had almost extirpated Christianity from its original home, founded great monarchies in Asia and Africa, planted a noble, though transient and exotic, civilisation in Spain, menaced the capital of the Eastern Empire, and, but for the issue of a single battle, they would probably have extended their sceptre over the energetic and progressive races of Central Europe. The wave was broken by Charles Martel, at the Battle of Poitiers, and it is now useless to speculate what might have been the consequences had Mohammedanism unfurled its triumphant banner among those Teutonic tribes who have so often changed their creed, and on whom the course of civilisation has so largely depended. But

one great change was in fact achieved. The spirit of Mohammedanism slowly passed into Christianity, and transformed it into its image. The spectacle of an essentially military religion fascinated men who were at once very warlike and very superstitious. The panic that had palsied Europe was after a long interval succeeded by a fierce reaction of resentment. Pride and religion conspired to urge the Christian warriors against those who had so often defeated the armies and wasted the territory of Christendom, who had shorn the empire of the Cross of many of its fairest provinces, and profaned that holy city which was venerated not only for its past associations, but also for the spiritual blessings it could still bestow upon the pilgrim. The papal indulgences proved not less efficacious in stimulating the military spirit than the promises of Mohammed, and for about two centuries every pulpit in Christendom proclaimed the duty of war with the unbeliever, and represented the battlefield as the sure path to heaven. The religious orders which arose united the character of the priest with that of the warrior, and when, at the hour of sunset, the soldier knelt down to pray before his cross, that cross was the handle of his sword.

It would be impossible to conceive a more complete transformation than Christianity had thus undergone, and it is melancholy to contrast with its aspect during the Crusades the impression it had once most justly made upon the world, as the spirit of gentleness and of peace encountering the spirit of violence and war. Among the many curious habits of the pagan Irish, one of the most significant was that of perpendicular burial. With a feeling something like that which induced Vespasian to declare that a Roman emperor should die standing, the pagan warriors shrank from the notion of being prostrate even in death, and they appear to have regarded this martial burial as a special symbol of paganism. An old Irish manuscript tells how, when Christianity had been introduced into Ireland, a king of Ulster on his deathbed charged his son never to become a Christian, but to be buried standing upright like a man in battle, with his face for ever turned to the south, defying the men of Leinster.²

² Wakeman's *Archæologia Hibernica*, p. 21. However, Giraldus Cambrensis observes that the Irish

As late as the sixteenth century it is said that in some parts of Ireland children were baptised by immersion; but the right arms of the males were carefully held above the water, in order that, not having been dipped in the sacred stream, they might strike the more deadly blow.¹

It had been boldly predicted by some of the early Christians that the conversion of the world would lead to the establishment of perpetual peace. In looking back, with our present experience, we are driven to the melancholy conclusion that, instead of diminishing the number of wars, ecclesiastical influence has actually and very seriously increased it. We may look in vain for any period since Constantine in which the clergy, as a body, exerted themselves to repress the military spirit, or to prevent or abridge a particular war, with an energy at all comparable to that which they displayed in stimulating the fanaticism of the Crusaders, in producing the atrocious massacre of the Albigenses, in embittering the religious contests that followed the Reformation. Private wars were, no doubt, in some degree repressed by their influence; for the institution of the "Truce of God" was for a time of much value, and when, towards the close of the Middle Ages, the custom of duels arose, it was strenuously condemned by the clergy; but we can hardly place any great value on their exertions in this field when we remember that duels were almost or altogether unknown to the pagan world; that, having arisen in a period of great superstition, the anathemas of the Church were almost impotent to discourage them; and that in our own century they are rapidly disappearing before the simple censure of an industrial society. It is possible—though it would, I imagine, be difficult to prove it—that the mediatorial office, so often exercised by bishops, may sometimes have prevented wars; and it is certain that during the period of the religious wars so much military spirit existed in Europe that it must necessarily have found a vent, and under no circumstances could the period have been one of perfect peace. But when all these qualifications have been fully admitted, the broad fact will remain that, with the exception of Moham-

medanism, no other religion has done so much to produce war as was done by the religious teachers of Christendom during several centuries. The military fanaticism evoked by the indulgences of the popes, by the exhortations of the pulpit, by the religious importance attached to the relics at Jerusalem, and by the prevailing hatred of misbelievers, has scarcely ever been equalled in its intensity, and it has caused the effusion of oceans of blood, and has been productive of incalculable misery to the world. Religious fanaticism was a main cause of the earlier wars, and an important ingredient in the later ones. The peace principles, that were so common before Constantine, have found scarcely any echo except from Erasmus, the Anabaptists, and the Quakers;² and although some very important pacific agencies have arisen out of the industrial progress of modern times, these have been, for the most part, wholly unconnected with, and have in some cases been directly opposed to, theological interests.

But although theological influences cannot reasonably be said to have diminished the number of wars, they have had a very real and beneficial effect in diminishing their atrocity. On few subjects have the moral opinions of different ages exhibited so marked a variation as in their judgments of what punishment may justly be imposed on a conquered enemy, and these variations have often been cited as an argument against those who believe in the existence of natural moral perceptions. To those, however, who accept that doctrine, with the limitations that have been stated in the first chapter, they can cause no perplexity. In the first dawning of the human intelligence (as I have said) the notion of duty, as distinguished from that of interest, appears, and the mind, in reviewing the various emotions by which it is influenced, recognises the unselfish and benevolent motives as essentially and generically superior to the selfish and the cruel. But it is the general condition of society alone that determines the standard of benevolence—the classes towards which every good man will exercise it. At first, the range of duty is the family, the tribe, the state, the confederation. Within these limits every man

saints were peculiarly vindictive, and St. Columba and St. Comgall are said to have been leaders in a sanguinary conflict about a church near Coleraine. See Keeve's edition of Adamnan's *Life of St. Columba*, pp. lxxvii, 253.

² Campion's *History of Ireland* (1571), book i. ch. vi.

PART. II.

² It seems curious to find in so calm and unfanatical a writer as Justus Lipsius the following passage. "Jam et invasio quædam legitima videtur etiam sine injuria, ut in barbaros et moribus aut religione prorsum a nobis abhorrentes." (*Politiconum sive Civilis Doctrina libri*, Paris, 1594, lib. iv. ch. ii. cap. iv.)

feels himself under moral obligations to those about him; but he regards the outer world as we regard wild animals, as beings upon whom he may justifiably prey. Hence we may explain the curious fact that the terms "brigand" or "corsair" conveyed in the early stages of society no notion of moral guilt.¹ Such men were looked upon simply as we look upon huntsmen, and if they displayed courage and skill in their pursuit they were deemed fit subjects for admiration. Even in the writings of the most enlightened philosophers of Greece, war with barbarians is represented as a form of chase, and the simple desire of obtaining the barbarians as slaves was considered a sufficient reason for invading them. The right of the conqueror to kill his captives was generally recognised, nor was it at first restricted by any considerations of age or sex. Several instances are recorded of Greek and other cities being deliberately destroyed by Greeks or by Romans, and the entire populations ruthlessly massacred.² The whole career of the early Republic of Rome, though much idealised and transfigured by later historians, was probably governed by these principles.³

¹ "Con l'occasione di queste cose Plutarco nel *Teseo* dice che gli eroi si recavano a grande onore e si reputavano in pregio d'armi con l'esser chiamati 'ladroni'; siccome a' tempi barbari fuor di quello di 'corsale' era titolo reputato di signoria; d'intorno a' quali tempi venuto Solone, si dice aver permesso nelle sue leggi le venute per cagion di prede; tanto Solone ben intese questa nostra compiuta umanità, nella quale costoro non godono del diritto natural delle genti. Ma quel che fa più maraviglia è che Platone ed Aristotele posero il ladroccio fralle spezie della caccia e con tali e tanti filosofi d'una gente umanissima convengono con la loro barbarie i Germani antichi: appo i quali al refen di Cesare i ladroccetti non solo non eran infami, ma si tenevano tra gli esercizi della virtù, siccome tra quelli che per costume non applicando ad arte alcuna così fuggivano l'ozio." (Vico, *Scienza Nuova*, II. 6.) See, too, Whewell's *Elements of Morality*, book vi. ch. II.

² The ancient right of war is fully discussed by Grotius, *De Jure*, lib. II. See, especially, the horrible catalogue of tragedies in cap. 4. The military feeling that regards capture as disgraceful had probably some, though only a very subordinate, influence in producing cruelty to the prisoners.

³ "Le jour où Athènes décréta que tous les Mityléniens, sans distinction de sexe ni d'âge, seraient exterminés elle ne croyait pas dépasser son droit; quand, le lendemain, elle revint sur son décret, et se contenta de mettre à mort mille citoyens et de confisquer toutes les terres, elle se crut humaine et indulgente. Après la prise de Platée les hommes furent égorgés, les femmes vendues, et personne n'accusa les vainqueurs d'avoir violé le droit. C'est en vertu de ce droit de la guerre que Rome a étendu la solitude autour d'elle, du territoire où les Volques avaient vingt-trois cités elle a fait les Marais Pontins; les cinquante-trois villes du Latium ont disparu; dans le Samnium on put longtemps reconnaître les lieux où les armées romaines avaient passé, moins aux vestiges de leurs camps qu'à la solitude qui régnait aux environs." (Fustel de Coulanges, *La Cité antique*, pp. 263-264.)

The normal fate of the captive, which among barbarians had been death, was, in civilised antiquity, slavery; but many thousands were condemned to the gladiatorial shows, and the vanquished general was commonly slain in the Mamertine prison, while his conqueror ascended in triumph to the Capitol.

A few traces of a more humane spirit may, it is true, be discovered. Plato had advocated the liberation of all Greek prisoners upon payment of a fixed ransom,⁴ and the Spartan general Callicratidas had nobly acted upon this principle;⁵ but his example never appears to have been generally followed. In Rome the notion of international obligation was very strongly felt. No war was considered just which had not been officially declared; and even in the case of wars with barbarians, the Roman historians often discuss the sufficiency or insufficiency of the motives, with a conscientious severity a modern historian could hardly surpass.⁶ The later Greek and Latin writings occasionally contain maxims which exhibit a considerable progress in this sphere. The sole legitimate object of war both Cicero and Sallust declared to be an assured peace. That war, according to Tacitus, ends well which ends with a pardon. Pliny refused to apply the epithet "great" to Caesar, on account of the torrents of human blood he had shed. Two Roman conquerors⁴ are credited with the saying that it is better to save the life of one citizen than to destroy a thousand enemies. Marcus Aurelius mournfully assimilated the career of a conqueror to that of a simple robber. Nations or armies which voluntarily submitted to Rome were habitually treated with great leniency, and numerous acts of individual magnanimity are recorded. The violation of the chastity of conquered women by soldiers in a siege was denounced as a rare and atrocious crime.⁵ The extreme atrocities of ancient war appear at last to have been practically, though not legally, restricted to two classes.⁶ Cities where Roman

¹ Plato, *Republic*, lib. v.; Bodin, *République*, liv. I. cap. 5.

² Grote, *Hist. of Greece*, vol. viii. p. 224. Agesilaus was also very humane to captives. (*Ibid.* pp. 365-336.)

³ This appears continually in Livy, but most of all, I think, in the Gaulish historian, Florus.

⁴ Scipio and Trajan.

⁵ See some very remarkable passages in Grotius, *De Jure Belli*, lib. III. cap. 4, § 19.

⁶ These mitigations are fully enumerated by Ayala, *De Jure et Officiis Bellicis* (Antwerp, 1597); Grotius, *De Jure*. It is remarkable that both Ayala and

ambassadors had been insulted, or where some special act of ill faith or cruelty had taken place, were razed to the ground, and their populations massacred or delivered into slavery. Barbarian prisoners were regarded almost as wild beasts, and sent in thousands to fill the slave market or to combat in the arena.

The changes Christianity effected in the rights of war were very important, and they may, I think, be comprised under three heads. In the first place, it suppressed the gladiatorial shows, and thereby saved thousands of captives from a bloody death. In the next place, it steadily discouraged the practice of enslaving prisoners, ransomed immense multitudes with charitable contributions, and by slow and insensible gradations proceeded on its path of mercy till it became a recognised principle of international law that no Christian prisoners should be reduced to slavery.¹ In the third place, it had a more indirect but very powerful influence by the creation of a new warlike ideal. The ideal knight of the Crusades and of chivalry, uniting all the force and fire of the ancient warrior with something of the tenderness and humility of the Christian saint, sprang from the conjunction of the two streams of religious and of military feeling; and although this ideal, like all others, was a

creation of the imagination not often perfectly realised in life, yet it remained the type and model of warlike excellence, to which many generations aspired; and its softening influence may even now be largely traced in the character of the modern gentleman.

Together with the gradual fusion of the military spirit with Christianity we may dimly descry, in the period before Charlemagne, the first stages of that consecration of secular rank which at a later period, in the forms of chivalry, the divine right of kings, and the reverence for aristocracies, played so large a part both in moral and in political history.

We have already seen that the course of events in the Roman Empire had been towards the continual aggrandisement of the imperial power. The representative despotism of Augustus was at last succeeded by the oriental despotism of Diocletian. The Senate sank into a powerless assembly of imperial nominees, and the spirit of Roman freedom wholly perished with the extinction of Stoicism.

It would probably be a needless refinement to seek any deeper causes for this change than may be found in the ordinary principles of human nature. Despotism is the normal and legitimate government of an early society in which knowledge has not yet developed the powers of the people; but when it is introduced into a civilised community it is of the nature of a disease, and a disease which, unless it be checked, has a continual tendency to spread. When free nations abdicate their political functions, they gradually lose both the capacity and the desire for freedom. Political talent and ambition, having no sphere for action, steadily decay, and servile, enervating, and vicious habits proportionately increase. Nations are organic beings in a constant process of expansion or decay, and where they do not exhibit a progress of liberty they usually exhibit a progress of servitude.

It can hardly be asserted that Christianity had much influence upon this change. By accelerating in some degree that withdrawal of the virtuous energies of the people from the sphere of government which had long been in process, it prevented the great improvement of morals, which it undoubtedly effected, from appearing perceptibly in public affairs. It taught a doctrine of passive obedience, which its disciples nobly

Grotius base their attempts to mitigate the severity of war chiefly upon the writings and examples of the pagans. The limits of the right of conquerors and the just causes of war are discussed by Cicero, *De Offic.* lib. 1.

¹ In England the change seems to have immediately followed conversion. "The evangelical precepts of peace and love," says a very learned historian, "did not put an end to war, they did not put an end to aggressive conquests, but they distinctly humanised the way in which war was carried on. From this time forth the never-ending wars with the Welsh cease to be wars of extermination. The heathen English had been satisfied with nothing short of the destruction and expulsion of their enemies; the Christian English thought it enough to reduce them to political subjection. The Christian Welsh could now sit down as subjects of the Christian Saxon. The Welshman was acknowledged as a man and a citizen, and was put under the protection of the law" (*Freeman's Hist. of the Norman Conquest*, vol. 1, pp. 33-34.) Christians who assisted infidels in wars were *ipso facto* excommunicated, and might therefore be enslaved, but all others were free from slavery. "Et quidem inter Christianos laudabili et antiqua consuetudine introductum est, ut capti hinc inde, utcumque justo bello, non fierent servi, sed liberi servarentur donec solvant precium redemptionis." (Ayala, lib. 1, cap. 5.) "This rule, at least," says Grotius, "(though but a small matter) the reverence for the Christian law has enforced, which Socrates vainly sought to have established among the Greeks." The Mohammedans also made it a rule not to enslave their co-religionists. (Grotius, *De Jure*, iii, 7, § 9.) Pagan and barbarian prisoners were, however, sold as slaves (especially by the Spaniards) till very recently.

observed in the worst periods of persecution. On the other hand, the Christians emphatically repudiated the ascription of divine honours to the sovereign, and they asserted with heroic constancy their independent worship, in defiance of the law. After the time of Constantine, however, their zeal became far less pure, and sectarian interests wholly governed their principles. Much misapplied learning has been employed in endeavouring to extract from the Fathers a consistent doctrine concerning the relations of subjects to their sovereigns; but every impartial observer may discover that the principle upon which they acted was exceedingly simple. When a sovereign was sufficiently orthodox in his opinions, and sufficiently zealous in patronising the Church and in persecuting the heretics, he was extolled as an angel. When his policy was opposed to the Church he was represented as a dæmon. The estimate which Gregory of Tours has given of the character of Clovis, though far more frank, is not a more striking instance of moral perversion than the fulsome and indeed blasphemous adulation which Eusebius poured upon Constantine—a sovereign whose character was at all times of the most mingled description, and who, shortly after his conversion, put to a violent death his son, his nephew, and his wife. If we were to estimate the attitude of ecclesiastics to sovereigns by the language of Eusebius, we should suppose that they ascribed to them a direct Divine inspiration, and exalted the imperial dignity to an extent that was before unknown.¹ But when Julian mounted the throne the whole aspect of the Church was changed. This great and virtuous, though misguided sovereign, whose private life was a model of purity, who carried to the throne the manners, tastes, and friendships of a philosophic life, and who proclaimed and, with very slight exceptions, acted with the largest and most generous toleration, was an enemy of the Church, and all the vocabulary of invective was in consequence habitually lavished upon him. Ecclesiastics and laymen combined in insulting him; and when, after a brief but glorious reign of less than two years, he met an honourable death on the battlefield, neither the disaster that had befallen the Roman arms, nor

the present dangers of the army, nor the heroic courage which the fallen emperor had displayed, nor the majestic tranquillity of his end, nor the tears of his faithful friends, could shame the Christian community into the decency of silence. A peal of brutal merriment filled the land. In Antioch the Christians assembled in the theatres and in the churches to celebrate with rejoicing the death which their emperor had met in fighting against the enemies of his country.² A crowd of vindictive legends expressed the exaltation of the Church,³ and St. Gregory Nazianzen devoted his eloquence to immortalising it. His brother had at one time been a high official in the Empire, and had fearlessly owned his Christianity under Julian; but that emperor not only did not remove him from his post, but even honoured him with his warm friendship.³ The body of Julian had been laid but a short time in the grave when St. Gregory delivered two fierce invectives against his memory, collected the grotesque calumnies that had been heaped upon his character, expressed a regret that his remains had not been flung after death into the common sewer, and regaled the hearers by an emphatic assertion of the tortures that were awaiting him in hell. Among the pagans a charge of the gravest kind was brought against the Christians. It was said that Julian died by the spear, not of an enemy, but of one of his own Christian soldiers. When we remember that he was at once an emperor and a general, that he fell when bravely and confidently leading his army in the field, and in the critical moment of a battle on which the fortunes of the Empire largely depended, this charge, which Libanius has made, appears to involve as large an amount of base treachery as any that can be conceived. It was probably a perfectly groundless calumny; but the manner in which it was regarded among the Christians is singularly characteristic. "Libanius," says one of the ecclesiastical historians, "clearly states that the emperor fell by the hand of a Christian; and this, probably, was the truth. It is not unlikely that some of the soldiers who then served in the Roman army might have conceived the idea of acting like the ancient slayers of tyrants, who exposed themselves to

¹ The character of Constantine, and the estimate of it in Eusebius, are well treated by Dean Stanley, *Lectures on the Eastern Church* (Lect. vi.)

² Theodoret, iii. 28

³ They are collected by Chateaubriand, *Études hist.* deuxième disc. deuxième partie.

³ See St. Gregory's oration on *Cæsarius*.

death in the cause of liberty, and fought in defence of their country, their families, and their friends, and whose names are held in universal admiration. Still less is he deserving of blame who, for the sake of God and of religion, performed so bold a deed."¹

It may be asserted, I think, without exaggeration, that the complete subordination of all other principles to their theological interests which characterised the ecclesiastics under Julian continued for many centuries. No language of invective was too extreme to be applied to a sovereign who opposed their interests. No language of adulation was too extravagant for a sovereign who sustained them. Of all the emperors who disgraced the throne of Constantinople, the most odious and ferocious was probably Phocas. An obscure centurion, he rose by a military revolt to the supreme power, and the Emperor Maurice, with his family, fell into his hands. He resolved to put the captive emperor to death; but, first of all, he ordered his five children to be brought out and to be successively murdered before the eyes of their father, who bore the awful sight with a fine mixture of antique heroism and of Christian piety, murmuring, as each child fell beneath the knife of the assassin, "Thou art just, O Lord, and righteous are thy judgments," and even interposing, at the last moment, to reveal the heroic fraud of the nurse who desired to save his youngest child by substituting for it her own. But Maurice—who had been a weak and avaricious rather than a vicious sovereign—had shown himself jealous of the influence of the Pope; had forbidden the soldiers, during the extreme danger of their country, deserting their colours to enrol themselves as monks; and had even encouraged the pretensions of the Archbishop of Constantinople to the title of Universal Bishop; and in the eyes of the Roman priests the recollection of these crimes was sufficient to excuse the most brutal of murders. In two letters, full of passages from Scripture, and replete with fulsome and blasphemous flattery, the Pope, St. Gregory the Great, wrote to congratulate Phocas and his wife upon their triumph; he called heaven and earth to rejoice over them; he placed their images to be venerated in the Lateran; and he adroitly insinuated that it was

impossible that, with their well-known piety, they could fail to be very favourable to the See of Peter.²

The course of events in relation to the monarchical power was for some time different in the East and the West. Constantine had himself assumed more of the pomp and manner of an oriental sovereign than any preceding emperor, and the court of Constantinople was soon characterised by an extravagance of magnificence on the part of the monarch, and of adulation on the part of the subjects, which has probably never been exceeded.³ The imperial power in the East overshadowed the ecclesiastical, and the priests, notwithstanding their fierce outbreak during the iconoclastic controversy, and a few minor paroxysms of revolt, gradually sank into that contented subservience which has usually characterised the Eastern Church. In the West, however, the Roman bishops were in a great degree independent of the sovereigns, and in some degree opposed to their interests. The transfer of the imperial power to Constantinople, by leaving the Roman bishops the chief personages in a city which long association as well as actual power rendered the foremost in the world, was one of the great causes of the aggrandisement of the Papacy; and the Arianism of many sovereigns, the jealousy which others exhibited of ecclesiastical encroachments, and the lukewarmness of a few in persecuting heretics, were all causes of dissension. On the severance of the Empire, the Western Church came in contact with rulers of another type. The barbarian kings were little more than military chiefs, elected for the most part by the people, surrounded by little or no special sanctity, and maintaining their precarious and very restricted authority by their courage or their skill. A few feebly imitated the pomp of the Roman emperors, but their claims had no great weight with the world. The aureole which the genius of Theodoric cast around his throne passed away upon his death, and the Arianism of that great sovereign sufficiently debarred him from the sympathies of the Church. In Gaul, under

¹ *Ep.* xlii. 31-39. In the second of these letters (which is addressed to Leontia) he says: "Rogare forsitan debui ut ecclesiam beati Petri apostoli quæ nunc usque gravibus insidiis laboravit, haberet Vestra Tranquillitas specialiter commendatam. Sed qui scio quia omnipotentem Deum diligitis, non debeo petere quod sponte ex benignitate vestre pietatis exhibetis."

² See the graphic description in Gibbon, ch. lvi.

³ Sozomen, vi. 2.

a few bold and unscrupulous men, the Merovingian dynasty emerged from a host of petty kings, and consolidated the whole country into one kingdom; but after a short period it degenerated; the kings became mere puppets in the hands of the mayors of the palace, and these latter, whose office had become hereditary, who were the chiefs of the great landed proprietors, and who had acquired by their position a personal ascendancy over the sovereigns, became the virtual rulers of the nation.

It was out of these somewhat unpromising conditions that the mediæval doctrine of the divine right of kings, and the general reverence for rank, that formed the essence of chivalry, were slowly evolved. Political and moral causes conspired in producing them. The chief political causes—which are well known—may be summed up in a few words.

When Leo the Isaurian attempted, in the eighth century, to repress the worship of images, the resistance which he met at Constantinople, though violent, was speedily allayed; but the Pope, assuming a far higher position than any Byzantine ecclesiastic could attain, boldly excommunicated the emperor, and led a revolt against his authority, which resulted in the virtual independence of Italy. His position was at this time singularly grand. He represented a religious cause to which the great mass of the Christian world were passionately attached. He was venerated as the emancipator of Italy. He exhibited, in the hour of his triumph, a moderation which conciliated many enemies, and prevented the anarchy that might naturally have been expected. He presided, at the same time, over a vast monastic organisation, which ramified over all Christendom, propagated his authority among many barbarous nations, and, by its special attachment to the Papacy, as distinguished from the Episcopacy, contributed very much to transform Christianity into a spiritual despotism. One great danger, however, still menaced his power. The barbarous Lombards were continually invading his territory and threatening the independence of Rome. The Lombard monarch, Luitprand, had quailed in the very hour of his triumph before the menace of eternal torture; but his successor, Astolphus, was proof against every fear, and it seemed as though the Papal city must have inevitably succumbed before his arms.

In their complete military impotence, the Popes looked abroad for some foreign succour, and they naturally turned to the Franks, whose martial tastes and triumphs were universally renowned. Charles Martel, though simply a mayor of the palace, had saved Europe from the Mohammedans, and the Pope expected that he would unsheathe his sword for the defence of the Vatican. Charles, however, was deaf to all entreaties; and, although he had done more than any ruler since Constantine for the Church, his attention seems to have been engrossed by the interests of his own country, and he was much alienated from the sympathies of the clergy. An ancient legend tells how a saint saw his soul carried by dæmons into hell, because he had secularised Church property; and a more modern historian¹ has ascribed his death to his having hesitated to defend the Pope. His son, Pepin, however, actuated probably in different degrees by personal ambition, a desire for military adventure, and religious zeal, listened readily to the prayer of the Pope, and a compact was entered into between the parties, which proved one of the most important events in history. Pepin agreed to secure the Pope from the danger by which he was threatened. The Pope agreed to give his religious sanction to the ambition of Pepin, who designed to depose the Merovingian dynasty, and to become in name, as he was already in fact, the sovereign of Gaul.

It is not necessary for me to recount at length the details of these negotiations, which are described by many historians. It is sufficient to say that the compact was religiously observed. Pepin made two expeditions to Italy, and completely shattered the power of the Lombards, wresting from them the rich exarchate of Ravenna, which he ceded to the Pope, who still retained his nominal allegiance to the Byzantine emperor, but who became, by this donation, for the first time avowedly an independent temporal prince. On the other hand, the deposition of Childeric was peaceably effected; the last of the Merovingians was immured in a monastery, and the Carolingian dynasty ascended the throne under the special benediction of the Pope, who performed on the occasion the ceremony of consecration, which had not previously been in

¹ Baronius.

general use,¹ placed the crown with his own hands on the head of Pepin, and delivered a solemn anathema against all who should rebel against the new king or against his successors.

The extreme importance of these events was probably not fully realised by any of the parties concerned in them. It was evident, indeed, that the Pope had been freed from a pressing danger, and had acquired a great accession of temporal power, and also that a new dynasty had arisen in Gaul under circumstances that were singularly favourable and imposing. But much more important than these facts was the permanent consecration of the royal authority that had been effected. The Pope had successfully asserted his power of deposing and elevating kings, and had thus acquired a position which influenced the whole subsequent course of European history. The monarch, if he had become in some degree subservient to the priest, had become in a great degree independent of his people; the divine origin of his power was regarded as a dogma of religion, and a sanctity surrounded him which immeasurably aggrandised his power. The ascription by the pagans of divinity to kings had had no appreciable effect in increasing their authority or restraining the limits of criticism or of rebellion. The ascription of a divine right to kings, independent of the wishes of the people, has been one of the most enduring and most potent of superstitions, and it has even now not wholly vanished from the world.²

Mere isolated political events have, however, rarely or never this profound influence unless they have been preceded and prepared by other agencies. The first predisposing cause of the ready reception of the doctrine of the divine character of authority may probably be found in the prominence of the monastic system. I have already observed that this

system represents in its extreme form that exaltation of the virtues of humility and of obedience which so broadly distinguishes the Christian from the pagan type of excellence. I have also noticed that, owing to the concurrence of many causes, it had acquired such dimensions and influence as to supply the guiding ideal of the Christian world. Controlling or monopolising all education and literature, furnishing most of the legislators and many of the statesmen of the age, attracting to themselves all moral enthusiasm and most intellectual ability, the monks soon left their impress on the character of nations. Habits of obedience and dispositions of humility were diffused, revered, and idealised; and a Church which rested mainly on tradition fostered a deep sense of the sanctity of antiquity and a natural disposition to observe traditional customs. In this manner a tone of feeling was gradually formed that assimilated with the monarchical and aristocratical institutions of feudalism, which flourished chiefly because they corresponded with the moral feelings of the time.

In the next place, a series of social and political causes diminished the personal independence for which the barbarians had been noted. The king had at first been not the sovereign of a country, but the chief of a tribe.³ Gradually, however, with more settled habits, the sovereignty assumed a territorial character, and we may soon discover the rudiments of a territorial aristocracy. The kings gave their leading chiefs portions of conquered land or of the royal domains, under the name of benefices. The obligation of military service was attached to these benefices, and, by slow and perhaps insensible stages, each of which has been the subject of fierce controversy, they were made irrevocable and ultimately hereditary. While society was still disorganised, small landlords purchased the protection of the Church, or of some important chief, by surrendering their estates, which they received back as tenants, subject to the condition of the payment of rent or of military service. Others, without making such surrender,

¹ Mably, ii 1, Gibbon, ch. xlix.

² There are some good remarks upon the way in which, among the free Franks, the bishops taught the duty of passive obedience in Mably, *Obs. sur l'Histoire de France*, livre i. ch. iii. Gregory of Tours, in his address to Chilperic, had said "If any of us, O king, transgress the boundaries of justice, thou art at hand to correct us; but if thou shouldst exceed them, who is to condemn thee? We address thee, and if it please thee thou listenest to us; but if it please thee not, who is to condemn thee save He who has proclaimed Himself Justice?" (Greg. Tur. v. 19.) On the other hand, Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims, strongly asserted the obligation of kings to observe the law, and denounced as diabolical the doctrine that they are subject to none but God. (Allen, *On the Royal Prerogative*, 1849, pp. 171-172a.)

³ The exact degree of the authority of the barbarian kings, and the different stages by which their power was increased, are matters of great controversy. The reader may consult Thierry's *Lettres sur l'Hist. de France* (let. 9), Guizot's *Hist. de la Civilisation*; Mably, *Observ. sur l'Hist. de France*, Freeman's *Hist. of the Norman Conquest*, vol. 1.

placed themselves under the care of a neighbouring lord, and offered in return homage or military aid. At the same time, through causes to which I have already adverted, the free peasants, for the most part, sank into serfs, subject to and protected by the landowners. In this manner a hierarchy of ranks was gradually formed, of which the sovereign was the apex and the serf the basis. The complete legal organisation of this hierarchy belongs to the period of feudalism, which is not within the scope of the present volume; but the chief elements of feudalism existed before Charlemagne, and the moral results flowing from them may be already discerned. Each rank, except the very highest, was continually brought into contact with a superior, and a feeling of constant dependence and subordination was accordingly fostered. To the serf, who depended for all things upon the neighbouring noble—to the noble, who held all his dignities on the condition of frequent military service under his sovereign, the idea of secular rank became indissolubly connected with that of supreme greatness.

It will appear evident from the foregoing observations that in the period before Charlemagne the moral and political causes were already in action which, at a much later period, produced the organisation of chivalry—an organisation which was founded on the combination and the glorification of secular rank and military prowess. But, in order that the tendencies I have described should acquire their full force, it was necessary that they should be represented or illustrated in some great personage, who, by the splendour and the beauty of his career, could fascinate the imaginations of men. It is much easier to govern great masses of men through their imagination than through their reason. Moral principles rarely act powerfully upon the world except by way of example or ideals. When the course of events has been to glorify the ascetic or monarchical or military spirit, a great saint or sovereign or soldier will arise, who will concentrate in one dazzling focus the blind tendencies of his time, kindle the enthusiasm and fascinate the imagination of the people. But for the prevailing tendency, the great man would not have arisen, or would not have exercised his great influence. But for the great man, whose career appealed vividly to the ima-

gination, the prevailing tendency would never have acquired its full intensity.

This typical figure appeared in Charlemagne, whose colossal form towers with a majestic grandeur both in history and in romance. Of all the great rulers of men there has probably been no other who was so truly many-sided, whose influence pervaded so completely all the religious, intellectual, and political modes of thought existing in his time. Rising in one of the darkest periods of European history, this great emperor resuscitated, with a brief but dazzling splendour, the faded glories of the Empire of the West, conducted, for the most part in person, numerous expeditions against the barbarous nations around him, promulgated a vast system of legislation, reformed the discipline of every order of the Church, and reduced all classes of the clergy to subservience to his will; while, by legalising tithes, he greatly increased their material prosperity. He at the same time contributed, in a measure, to check the intellectual decadence by founding schools and libraries, and drawing around him all the scattered learning of Europe. He reformed the coinage, extended commerce, influenced religious controversies, and convoked great legislative assemblies, which ultimately contributed largely to the organisation of feudalism. In all these spheres the traces of his vast, organising, and far-seeing genius may be detected, and the influence which he exercised over the imaginations of men is shown by the numerous legends of which he is the hero. In the preceding ages the supreme ideal had been the ascetic. When the popular imagination embodied in legends its conception of humanity in its noblest and most attractive form, it instinctively painted some hermit-saint of many penances and many miracles. In the *Romances of Charlemagne* and of *Arthur* we may trace the dawning of a new type of greatness. The hero of the imagination of Europe was no longer a hermit, but a king, a warrior, a knight. The long train of influences I have reviewed, culminating in Charlemagne, had done their work. The age of the ascetics began to fade. The age of the Crusades and of chivalry succeeded it.

It is curious to observe the manner in which, under the influence of the prevailing tendency, the career of Charlemagne was transfigured by the popular imagina-

tion. His military enterprises had been chiefly directed against the Saxons, against whom he had made not less than thirty-two expeditions. With the Mohammedans he had but little contact. It was Charles Martel, not his grandson, who, by the great Battle of Poitiers, had checked their career. Charlemagne made in person but a single expedition against them in Spain, and that expedition was on a small scale, and was disastrous in its issue. But in the Carolingian romances, which arose at a time when the enthusiasm of the Crusades was permeating Christendom, events were represented in a wholly different light. Charles Martel has no place among the ideal combatants of the Church. He had appeared too early, his figure was not sufficiently great to fascinate the popular imagination, and by confiscating ecclesiastical property, and refusing to assist the Pope against the Lombards, he had fallen under the ban of the clergy. Charlemagne, on the other hand, was represented as the first and greatest of the Crusaders. His wars with the Saxons were scarcely noticed. His whole life was said to have been spent in heroic and triumphant combats with the followers of Mohammed.¹ Among the achievements attributed to him was an expedition to rescue Nîmes and Carcassonne from their grasp, which was, in fact, a dim tradition of the victories of Charles Martel.² He is even said to have carried his victorious arms into the heart of Palestine, and he is the hero of what are probably the three earliest extant romances of the Crusades.³ In fiction, as

in history, his reign forms the great landmark separating the early period of the Middle Ages from the age of military Christianity.

On the verge of this great change I draw this history to a close. In pursuing our long and chequered course from Augustus to Charlemagne, we have seen the rise and fall of many types of character and of many forms of enthusiasm. We have seen the influence of universal empire expanding, and the influence of Greek civilisation intensifying, the sympathies of Europe. We have surveyed the successive progress of Stoicism, Platonism, and Egyptian philosophies, at once reflecting and guiding the moral tendencies of society. We have traced the course of progress or retrogression in many fields of social, political, and legislative life, have watched the cradle of European Christianity, examined the causes of its triumph, the difficulties it encountered, and the priceless blessings its philanthropic spirit bestowed upon mankind. We have also pursued step by step the mournful history of its corruption, its asceticism, and its intolerance, the various transformations it produced or underwent when the turbid waters of the barbarian invasions had inundated the civilisations of Europe. It remains for me, before concluding this work, to investigate one class of subjects to which I have as yet but briefly adverted—to examine the effects of the changes I have described upon the character and position of woman, and upon the grave moral questions concerning the relations of the sexes.

¹ Faunel, *Hist. de la Poésie provençale*, tome ii. p. 252.

² *Ibid.* p. 258.

³ Le Grand D'Aussy, *Fabliaux*, pref. p. xxiv. These

romances were accounts of his expeditions to Spain, to Languedoc, and to Palestine.

CHAPTER V.

THE POSITION OF WOMEN

IN the long series of moral revolutions that have been described in the foregoing chapters, I have more than once had occasion to refer to the position that was assigned to woman in the community, and to the virtues and vices that spring directly from the relations of the sexes. I have not, however, as yet discussed these questions with a fullness at all corresponding to their historical importance, and I propose, in consequence, before concluding this volume, to devote a few pages to their examination. Of all the many questions that are treated in this work, there is none which I approach with so much hesitation, for there is probably none which it is so difficult to treat with clearness and impartiality, and at the same time without exciting any scandal or offence. The complexity of the problem, arising from the very large place which exceptional institutions or circumstances, and especially the influence of climate and race, have had on the chastity of nations, I have already noticed, and the extreme delicacy of the matters with which this branch of ethics is connected must be palpable to all. The first duty of an historian, however, is to truth; and it is absolutely impossible to present a true picture of the moral condition of different ages, and to form a true estimate of the moral effects of different religions, without adverting to the department of morals which has exhibited most change, and has probably exercised most influence.

It is natural that, in the period when men are still perfect barbarians, when their habits of life are still nomadic, and when, war and the chase being their sole pursuits, the qualities that are required in these form their chief measure of excellence, the inferiority of women to men should be regarded as undoubted, and their position should be extremely degraded. In all those qualities which are then most prized women are indisputably inferior. The social qualities in which

they are especially fitted to excel have no sphere for their display. The ascendancy of beauty is very faint, and, even if it were otherwise, few traces of female beauty could survive the hardships of the savage life. Woman is looked upon merely as the slave of man, and as the minister to his passions. In the first capacity her life is one of continual, abject, and unrequited toil. In the second capacity she is exposed to all the violent revulsions of feeling that follow, among rude men, the gratification of the animal passions.

Even in this early stage, however, we may trace some rudiments of those moral sentiments which are destined at a later period to expand. The institution of marriage exists. The value of chastity is commonly in some degree felt, and appears in the indignation which is displayed against the adulterer. The duty of restraining the passions is largely recognised in the female, though the males are only restricted by the prohibition of adultery.

The first two steps which are taken towards the elevation of woman are probably the abandonment of the custom of purchasing wives, and the construction of the family on the basis of monogamy. In the earliest periods of civilisation the marriage contract was arranged between the bridegroom and the father of the bride, on the condition of a sum of money being paid by the former to the latter. This sum, which is known in the laws of the barbarians as the "mundium,"¹ was in fact a payment to the father for the cession of his daughter, who thus became the bought slave of her husband. It is one of the most remarkable features of the ancient laws of India that they forbade this gift, on the ground that the parent should not sell his child;² but there can be little doubt that this sale was

¹ The *ἔδρα* of the Greeks.

² Legouvé, *Histoire morale des Femmes*, pp 95-96.

at one time the ordinary type of marriage. In the Jewish writings we find Jacob purchasing Leah and Rachel by certain services to their father; and this custom, which seems to have been at one time general in Judea,¹ appears in the age of Homer to have been general in Greece. At an early period, however, of Greek history the purchase-money was replaced by the dowry, or sum of money paid by the father of the bride for the use of his daughter;² and this, although it passed into the hands of the husband, contributed to elevate the wife, in the first place, by the dignity it gave her, and, in the next place, by special laws, which both in Greece and Rome secured it to her in most cases of separation.³ The wife thus possessed a guarantee against ill-usage by her husband. She ceased to be his slave, and became in some degree a contracting party. Among the early Germans a different and very remarkable custom existed. The bride did not bring any dowry to her husband, nor did the bridegroom give anything to the father of the bride; but he gave his gift to the bride herself on the morning after the first night of marriage, and this, which was called the "Morgengab," or morning gift, was the origin of the jointure.⁴

Still more important than the foregoing was the institution of monogamy, by which, from its earliest days, the Greek civilisation proclaimed its superiority to the Asiatic civilisations that had preceded it. We may regard monogamy either in

the light of our intuitive moral sentiment on the subject of purity, or in the light of the interests of society. In its Oriental or polygamous stage marriage is regarded almost exclusively in its lowest aspect, as a gratification of the passions; while in European marriages the mutual attachment and respect of the contracting parties, the formation of a household, and the long train of domestic feelings and duties that accompany it, have all their distinguished place among the motives of the contract, and the lower element has comparatively little prominence. In this way it may be intelligibly said, without any reference to utilitarian considerations, that monogamy is a higher state than polygamy. The utilitarian arguments in its defence are also extremely powerful, and may be summed up in three sentences. Nature, by making the number of males and females nearly equal, indicates it as natural. In no other form of marriage can the government of the family, which is one of the chief ends of marriage, be so happily sustained, and in no other does woman assume the position of the equal of man.

Monogamy was the general system in Greece, though there are said to have been slight and temporary deviations into the earlier system, after some great disasters, when an increase of population was ardently desired.⁵ A broad line must, however, be drawn between the legendary or poetical period, as reflected in Homer and perpetuated in the tragedians, and the later historical period. It is one of the most remarkable, and to some writers one of the most perplexing, facts in the moral history of Greece, that in the former and ruder period women had undoubtedly the highest place, and their type exhibited the highest perfection. Moral ideas, in a thousand forms, have been sublimated, enlarged, and changed, by advancing civilisation; but it may be fearlessly asserted that the types of female excellence which are contained in the Greek poems, while they are among the earliest, are also among the most perfect in the literature of mankind. The conjugal tenderness of Hector and Andromache; the unwearied fidelity of Penelope, awaiting through the long revolving years the return of her storm-tossed husband, who looked forward to her as to the crown

¹ Gen. xxix., xxxiv. 12; Deut. xxii. 29; 1 Sam. xxi. 25.

² The history of dowries is briefly noticed by Grote, *Hist. of Greece*, vol. ii. pp. 112-113, and more fully by Lord Kames, in the admirable chapter "On the Progress of the Female Sex," in his *Skeiches of the History of Man*, a book less read than it deserves to be. M. Legouvé has also devoted a chapter to it in his *Hist. morale des Femmes*. See, too, Legendre, *Traité de l'Opinion*, tome ii. pp. 329-330. We find traces of the dowry, as well as of the *êdva*, in Homer. Penelope had received a dowry from Icarus, her father M. Michelet, in one of those fanciful books which he has recently published, maintains a view of the object of the *êdva* which I do not remember to have seen elsewhere, and which I do not believe. He says "Ce prix n'est point un achat de la femme, mais une indemnité qui dédommage la famille du père pour les enfants futurs, qui ne profiteront pas à cette famille mais à celle où la femme va entrer." (*La Femme*, p. 166.)

³ In Rome, when the separation was due to the misconduct of the wife, the dowry belonged to her husband.

⁴ "Dotem non uxor marito sed uxori maritus offert." (Tac. *Ger. viii.*) On the Morgengab, see Canciani, *Leges Barbarorum* (Venetis, 1781), vol. i. pp. 102-104; pp. 230-231. Muratori, *Antich. Ital.* diss. xx. Luitprand enacted that no Lombard should give more than one-fourth of his substance as a Morgengab. In Gregory of Tours (ix. 20) we have an example of the gift of some cities as a Morgengab.

⁵ See, on this point, Aul. Gellius, *Noct. Att.* xv. 20. Euripides is said to have had two wives.

of all his labours; the heroic love of Alcestis, voluntarily dying that her husband might live; the filial piety of Antigone; the majestic grandeur of the death of Polyxena; the more subdued and saintly resignation of Iphigenia, excusing with her last breath the father who had condemned her; the joyous, modest, and loving Nausicaa, whose figure shines like a perfect idyll among the tragedies of the Odyssey—all these are pictures of perennial beauty, which Rome and Christendom, chivalry and modern civilisation, have neither eclipsed nor transcended. Virgin modesty and conjugal fidelity, the graces as well as the virtues of the most perfect womanhood, have never been more exquisitely portrayed. The female figures stand out in the canvas almost as prominently as the male ones, and are surrounded by an almost equal reverence. The whole history of the Siege of Troy is a history of the catastrophes that followed a violation of the nuptial tie. Yet, at the same time, the position of women was in some respects a degraded one. The custom of purchase-money given to the father of the bride was general. The husbands appear to have indulged largely, and with little or no censure, in concubines.¹ Female captives of the highest rank were treated with great harshness. The inferiority of women to men was strongly asserted, and it was illustrated and defended by a very curious physiological notion, that the generative power belonged exclusively to men, women having only a very subordinate part in the production of their children.² The woman Pandora was said to have been the author of all human ills.

In the historical age of Greece the legal position of women had in some respects slightly improved, but their moral condition had undergone a marked deterioration. Virtuous women lived a life of

perfect seclusion. The foremost and most dazzling type of Ionic womanhood was the courtesan, while, among the men, the latitude accorded by public opinion was almost unrestricted.

The facts in moral history which it is at once most important and most difficult to appreciate are what may be called the facts of feeling. It is much easier to show what men did or taught than to realise the state of mind that rendered possible such actions or teaching; and in the case before us we have to deal with a condition of feeling so extremely remote from that of our own day that the difficulty is pre-eminently great. Very sensual, and at the same time very brilliant, societies have indeed repeatedly existed, and the histories of both France and Italy afford many examples of an artistic and intellectual enthusiasm encircling those who were morally most frail; but the peculiarity of Greek sensuality is that it grew up, for the most part, uncensored, and indeed even encouraged, under the eyes of some of the most illustrious of moralists. If we can imagine Ninon de l'Enclos, at a time when the rank and splendour of Parisian society thronged her drawing-rooms, reckoning a Bossuet or a Fénelon among her followers—if we can imagine these prelates publicly advising her about the duties of her profession, and the means of attaching the affections of her lovers—we shall have conceived a relation scarcely more strange than that which existed between Socrates and the courtesan Theodota.

In order to reconstruct, as far as possible, the modes of feeling of the Greek moralists, it will be necessary, in the first place, to say a few words concerning one of the most delicate, but at the same time most important, problems with which the legislator and the moralist have to deal.

It was a favourite doctrine of the Christian Fathers that concupiscence, or the sensual passion, was the "original sin" of human nature; and it must be owned that the progress of knowledge, which is usually extremely opposed to the ascetic theory of life, concurs with the theological view in showing the natural force of this appetite to be far greater than the well-being of man requires. The writings of Malthus have proved, what the Greek moralists appear in a considerable degree to have seen, that its normal and temperate exercise in the form of marriage

¹ Aristotle said that Homer never gives a concubine to Menelaus, in order to intimate his respect for Helen—though false. (*Athenaeus*, xiii. 3.)

² Æschylus has put this curious notion into the mouth of Apollo, in a speech in the *Eumenides*. It has, however, been very widely diffused, and may be found in Indian, Greek, Roman, and even Christian writers. M. Legouvé, who has devoted a very curious chapter to the subject, quotes a passage from St. Thomas Aquinas, accepting it, and arguing from it that a father should be more loved than a mother. M. Legouvé says that when the male of one animal and the female of another are crossed, the type of the female usually predominates in the offspring. See Legouvé, *Hist. morale des Femmes*, pp. 216-228; Fustel de Coulanges, *La Cité antique*, pp. 30-40; and also a curious note by Boswell, in Croker's edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (1847), p. 472.

would produce, if universal, the utmost calamities to the world, and that, while nature seems in the most unequivocal manner to urge the human race to early marriages, the first condition of an advancing civilisation in populous countries is to restrain or diminish them. In no highly civilised society is marriage general on the first development of the passions, and the continual tendency of increasing knowledge is to render such marriages more rare. It is also an undoubted truth that, however much moralists may enforce the obligation of extra-matrimonial purity, this obligation has never been even approximately regarded; and in all nations, ages, and religions a vast mass of irregular indulgence has appeared, which has probably contributed more than any other single cause to the misery and the degradation of man.

There are two ends which a moralist, in dealing with this question, will especially regard—the natural duty of every man doing something for the support of the child he has called into existence, and the preservation of the domestic circle unassailed and unpolluted. The family is the centre and the archetype of the State, and the happiness and goodness of society are always in a very great degree dependent upon the purity of domestic life. The essentially exclusive nature of marital affection, and the natural desire of every man to be certain of the paternity of the child he supports, render the incursions of irregular passions within the domestic circle a cause of extreme suffering. Yet it would appear as if the excessive force of these passions would render such incursions both frequent and inevitable.

Under these circumstances, there has arisen in society a figure which is certainly the most mournful, and in some respects the most awful, upon which the eye of the moralist can dwell. That unhappy being whose very name is a shame to speak; who counterfeits with a cold heart the transports of affection, and submits herself as the passive instrument of lust; who is scorned and insulted as the vilest of her sex, and doomed for the most part to disease and abject wretchedness and an early death, appears in every age as the perpetual symbol of the degradation and the sinfulness of man. Herself the supreme type of vice, she is ultimately the most efficient guardian of virtue. But for her the unchallenged purity of count-

less happy homes would be polluted, and not a few who, in the pride of their untampered chastity, think of her with an indignant shudder, would have known the agony of remorse and of despair. On that one degraded and ignoble form are concentrated the passions that might have filled the world with shame. She remains, while creeds and civilisations rise and fall, the eternal priestess of humanity, blasted for the sins of the people.

In dealing with this unhappy being, and with all of her sex who have violated the law of chastity, the public opinion of most Christian countries pronounces a sentence of extreme severity. In the Anglo-Saxon nations especially a single fault of this kind is sufficient, at least in the upper and middle classes, to affix an indelible brand which no time, no virtues, no penitence can wholly efface. This sentence is probably, in the first instance, simply the expression of the religious feeling on the subject; but it is also sometimes defended by powerful arguments drawn from the interests of society. It is said that the preservation of domestic purity is a matter of such transcendent importance that it is right that the most crushing penalties should be attached to an act which the imagination can easily transfigure, which legal enactments can never efficiently control, and to which the most violent passions may prompt. It is said, too, that an anathema which drives into obscurity all evidences of sensual passions is peculiarly fitted to restrict their operation—for, more than any other passions, they are dependent on the imagination, which is readily fired by the sight of evil. It is added that the emphasis with which the vice is stigmatised produces a corresponding admiration for the opposite virtue, and that a feeling of the most delicate and scrupulous honour is thus formed among the female population, which not only preserves from gross sin, but also dignifies and ennobles the whole character.

In opposition to these views several considerations of much weight have been urged. It is argued that, however persistently society may ignore this form of vice, it exists nevertheless, and on the most gigantic scale; and that evil rarely assumes such inveterate and perverting forms as when it is shrouded in obscurity and veiled by a hypocritical appearance of unconsciousness. The existence in England of certainly not less than fifty

thousand unhappy women,¹ sunk in the very lowest depths of vice and misery, shows sufficiently what an appalling amount of moral evil is festering uncontrolled, undiscussed, and unalleviated, under the fair surface of a decorous society. In the eyes of every physician, and indeed in the eyes of most continental writers who have adverted to the subject, no other feature of English life appears so infamous as the fact that an epidemic, which is one of the most dreadful now existing among mankind, which communicates itself from the guilty husband to the innocent wife, and even transmits its taint to her offspring, and which the experience of other nations conclusively proves may be vastly diminished, should be suffered to rage unchecked because the Legislature refuses to take official cognisance of its existence, or proper sanitary measures for its repression.² If the terrible censure which English public opinion passes upon every instance of female frailty in some degree diminishes the number, it does not prevent such instances from being extremely numerous, and it immeasurably aggravates the suffering they produce. Acts which in other European countries would excite only a slight and transient emotion spread in England, over a wide circle, all the bitterness of unmitigated anguish. Acts which naturally neither imply nor produce a total subversion of the moral feelings, and which in other countries are often followed by happy, virtuous, and affectionate lives, in England almost invariably lead to absolute ruin. Infanticide is greatly multiplied, and a vast proportion of those whose reputations and lives have been blasted by one momentary sin are hurled into the abyss of habitual prostitution—a condition which, owing to the sentence of public opinion and the neglect of legislators, is in no other European

country so hopelessly vicious or so irrevocable.³

It is added, too, that the immense multitude who are thus doomed to the extremity of lifelong wretchedness are not always, perhaps not generally, of those whose dispositions seem naturally incapable of virtue. The victims of seduction are often led aside quite as much by the ardour of their affections, and by the vivacity of their intelligence, as by any vicious propensities.⁴ Even in the lowest grades the most dispassionate observers have detected remains of higher feelings, which, in a different moral atmosphere and under different moral husbandry, would have undoubtedly been developed.⁵ The statistics of prostitution show that a great proportion of those who have fallen into it have been impelled by the most extreme poverty, in many instances verging upon starvation.⁶

These opposing considerations, which I have very briefly indicated, and which I do not propose to discuss or to estimate, will be sufficient to exhibit the magnitude of the problem. In the Greek civilisation

¹ Parent-Duchâtelet has given many statistics, showing the very large extent to which the French system of supervision deters those who were about to enter into prostitution, and reclaims those who had entered into it. He and Dr. Vintras concur in representing English prostitution as about the most degraded, and at the same time the most irrevocable.

² Miss Mulock, in her amiable but rather feeble book called *A Woman's Thoughts about Women*, has some good remarks on this point (pp. 291-293), which are all the more valuable as the authoress has not the faintest sympathy with any opinions concerning the character and position of women which are not strictly conventional. She notices the experience of Sunday-school mistresses, that, of their pupils who are seduced, an extremely large proportion are "of the very best, refined, intelligent, truthful, and affectionate."

³ See the very singular and painful chapter in Parent-Duchâtelet, called "Mœurs et Habitudes des Prostituées." He observes that they are remarkable for their kindness to one another in sickness or in distress; that they are not unfrequently charitable to poor people who do not belong to their class; that when one of them has a child it becomes the object of very general interest and affection; that most of them have lovers, to whom they are sincerely attached; that they rarely fail to show in the hospitals a very real sense of shame; and that many of them entered into their mode of life for the purpose of supporting aged parents. One anecdote is worth giving in the words of the author: "Un médecin n'entrant jamais dans leurs salles sans ôter légèrement son chapeau, par cette saine politesse il sut tellement conquérir leur confiance qu'il leur faisait faire tout ce qu'il voulait." This writer, I may observe, is not a romance writer or a theorist of any description. He is simply a physician who describes the results of a very large official experience.

⁴ Parent-Duchâtelet atteste que sur trois mille créatures perdues trente-cinq seulement avaient un état qui pouvait les nourrir, et que quatorze cents avaient été précipitées dans cette horrible vie par la misère. Une d'elles, quand elle s'y résolut, n'avait pas mangé depuis trois jours." (Legouvé, *Hist. morale des Femmes*, pp. 322-323.)

¹ Dr. Vintras, in a remarkable pamphlet (London, 1867) *On the Repression of Prostitution*, shows from the police statistics that the number of prostitutes known to the police in England and Wales, in 1864, was 49,370, and this is certainly much below the entire number. These, it will be observed, comprise only the habitual, professional prostitutes.

² Some measures have recently been taken in a few garrison towns. The moral sentiment of the community, it appears, would be shocked if Liverpool were treated on the same principles as Portsmouth. This very painful and revolting, but most important, subject has been treated with great knowledge, impartiality, and ability, by Parent-Duchâtelet, in his famous work, *La Prostitution dans la Ville de Paris*. The third edition contains very copious supplementary accounts, furnished by different doctors in different countries.

legislators and moralists endeavoured to meet it by the cordial recognition of two distinct orders of womanhood¹—the wife, whose first duty was fidelity to her husband; the hetæra, or mistress, who subsisted by her fugitive attachments. The wives of the Greeks lived in almost absolute seclusion. They were usually married when very young. Their occupations were to weave, to spin, to embroider, to superintend the household, to care for their sick slaves. They lived in a special and retired part of the house. The more wealthy seldom went abroad, and never except when accompanied by a female slave; never attended the public spectacles; received no male visitors except in the presence of their husbands, and had not even a seat at their own tables when male guests were there. Their pre-eminent virtue was fidelity, and it is probable that this was very strictly and very generally observed. Their remarkable freedom from temptations, the public opinion which strongly discouraged any attempt to seduce them, and the ample sphere for illicit pleasures that was accorded to the other sex—all contributed to protect it. On the other hand, living as they did almost exclusively among their female slaves, being deprived of all the educating influence of male society, and having no place at those public spectacles which were the chief means of Athenian culture, their minds must necessarily have been exceedingly contracted. Thucydides doubtless expressed the prevailing sentiment of his countrymen when he said that the highest merit of woman is not to be spoken of either for good or for evil; and Phidias illustrated the same feeling when he represented the heavenly Aphrodite standing on a tortoise, typifying thereby the secluded life of a virtuous woman.²

In their own restricted sphere their lives were probably not unhappy. Education and custom rendered the purely domestic life that was assigned to them a second nature, and must in most instances have reconciled them to the extra-matrimonial connections in which their husbands too frequently indulged. The

prevailing manners were very gentle. Domestic oppression is scarcely ever spoken of; the husband lived chiefly in the public place; causes of jealousy and of dissension could seldom occur; and a feeling of warm affection, though not a feeling of equality, must doubtless have in most cases spontaneously arisen. In the writings of Xenophon we have a charming picture of a husband who had received into his arms his young wife of fifteen, absolutely ignorant of the world and of its ways. He speaks to her with extreme kindness, but in the language that would be used to a little child. Her task, he tells her, is to be like a queen bee, dwelling continually at home and superintending the work of her slaves. She must distribute to each their tasks, must economise the family income, and must take especial care that the house is strictly orderly—the shoes, the pots, and the clothes always in their places. It is also, he tells her, a part of her duty to tend her sick slaves; but here his wife interrupted him, exclaiming, "Nay, but that will indeed be the most agreeable of my offices, if such as I treat with kindness are likely to be grateful and to love me more than before." With a very tender and delicate care to avoid everything resembling a reproach, the husband persuades his wife to give up the habits of wearing high-heeled boots, in order to appear tall, and of colouring her face with vermilion and white lead. He promises her that if she faithfully performs her duties he will himself be the first and most devoted of her slaves. He assured Socrates that when any domestic dispute arose he could extricate himself admirably if he was in the right; but that whenever he was in the wrong he found it impossible to convince his wife that it was otherwise.³

We have another picture of Greek married life in the writings of Plutarch, but it represents the condition of the Greek mind at a later period than that of Xenophon. In Plutarch the wife is represented not as the mere housekeeper, or as the chief slave of her husband, but as his equal and his companion. He enforces, in the strongest terms, reciprocity of obligations, and desires that the minds of women should be cultivated to the highest point.⁴ His precepts of mar-

¹ Concerning the position and character of Greek women, the reader may obtain ample information by consulting Becker's *Charities* (translated by Metcalfe, 1845); Ranneville, *La Femme dans l'Antiquité* (Paris, 1865); and an article "On Female Society in Greece," in the twenty-second volume of the *Quarterly Review*.

² Plutarch, *Comp. Prac.*

³ Xenophon, *Econ.* ii.

⁴ Plut. *Comp. Prac.* There is also an extremely

riage, indeed, fall little, if at all, below any that have appeared in modern days. His letter of consolation to his wife, on the death of their child, breathes a spirit of the tenderest affection. It is recorded of him that, having had some dispute with the relations of his wife, she feared that it might impair their domestic happiness, and she accordingly persuaded her husband to accompany her on a pilgrimage to Mount Helicon, where they offered up together a sacrifice to Love, and prayed that their affection for one another might never be diminished.

In general, however, the position of the virtuous Greek woman was a very low one. She was under a perpetual tutelage: first of all to her parents, who disposed of her hand, then to her husband, and in her days of widowhood to her sons. In cases of inheritance her male relations were preferred to her. The privilege of divorce, which, in Athens at least, she possessed as well as her husband, appears to have been practically almost nugatory, on account of the shock which public declarations in the law court gave to the habits which education and public opinion had formed. She brought with her, however, a dowry, and the recognised necessity of endowing daughters was one of the causes of those frequent expositions which were perpetrated with so little blame. The Athenian law was also peculiarly careful and tender in dealing with the interests of female orphans.¹ Plato had argued that women were equal to men; but the habits of the people were totally opposed to this theory. Marriage was regarded chiefly in a civic light, as the means of producing citizens, and in Sparta it was ordered that old or infirm husbands should cede their young wives to stronger men, who could produce vigorous soldiers for the State. The Lacedæmonian treatment of women, which differed in many respects from that which prevailed in the other Greek States, while it was utterly destructive of all delicacy of feeling or action, had undoubtedly the effect of producing a fierce and masculine patriotism; and many fine examples are recorded of Spartan mothers devoting their sons on the altar of their country, rejoicing over their deaths when nobly won, and infusing their own heroic spirit

into the armies of the people. For the most part, however, the names of virtuous women seldom appear in Greek history. The simple modesty which was evinced by Phocion's wife, in the period when her husband occupied the foremost position in Athens,² and a few instances of conjugal and filial affection, have been recorded; but in general the only women who attracted the notice of the people were the *hetærae*, or courtesans.³

In order to understand the position which these last assumed in Greek life, we must transport ourselves in thought into a moral latitude totally different from our own. The Greek conception of excellence was the full and perfect development of humanity in all its organs and functions, and without any tinge of asceticism. Some parts of human nature were recognised as higher than others; and to suffer any of the lower appetites to obscure the mind, restrain the will, and engross the energies of life was acknowledged to be disgraceful; but the systematic repression of a natural appetite was totally foreign to Greek modes of thought. Legislators, moralists, and the general voice of the people appear to have applied these principles almost unreservedly to intercourse between the sexes, and the most virtuous men habitually and openly entered into relations which would now be almost universally censured.

The experience, however, of many societies has shown that a public opinion may accord, in this respect, almost unlimited licence to one sex, without showing any corresponding indulgence to the other. But, in Greece, a concurrence of causes had conspired to bring a certain section of courtesans into a position they have in no other society attained. The voluptuous worship of Aphrodite gave a kind of religious sanction to their profession. Courtesans were the priestesses in her temples, and those of Corinth were believed by their prayers to have averted calamities from their city. Prostitution

¹ Plutarch, *Phocion*.

² Our information concerning the Greek courtesans is chiefly derived from the thirteenth book of the *Deipnosophists* of Athenæus, from the *Letters* of Alciphron, from the Dialogues of Lucian on courtesans, and from the oration of Demosthenes against Neæra. See, too, Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, iii. 11; and among modern books, Becker's *Charicles*. Athenæus was an Egyptian, whose exact date is unknown, but who appears to have survived Ulpian, who died in A.D. 208. He had access to, and gave extracts from, many works on this subject, which have now perished. Alciphron is believed to have lived near the time of Lucian.

beautiful picture of the character of a good wife in Aristotle. (*Economics*, book i. cap. vii.)

³ See Alexander's *History of Women* (London, 1783), vol. i. p. 201.

is said to have entered into the religious rites of Babylon, Byblus, Cyprus, and Corinth, and these, as well as Miletus, Tenedos, Lesbos, and Abydos, became famous for their schools of vice, which grew up under the shadow of the temples.¹

In the next place, the intense æsthetic enthusiasm that prevailed was eminently fitted to raise the most beautiful to honour. In a land and beneath a sky where natural beauty developed to the highest point, there arose a school of matchless artists both in painting and in sculpture, and public games and contests were celebrated, in which supreme physical perfection was crowned by an assembled people. In no other period of the world's history was the admiration of beauty in all its forms so passionate or so universal. It coloured the whole moral teaching of the time, and led the chief moralists to regard virtue simply as the highest kind of supersensual beauty. It appeared in all literature, where the beauty of form and style was the first of studies. It supplied at once the inspiration and the rule of all Greek art. It led the Greek wife to pray, before all other prayers, for the beauty of her children. It surrounded the most beautiful with an aureole of admiring reverence. The courtesan was often the queen of beauty. She was the model of the statues of Aphrodite, that commanded the admiration of Greece. Praxiteles was accustomed to reproduce the form of Phryne, and her statue, carved in gold, stood in the temple of Apollo at Delphi; and, when she was accused of corrupting the youth of Athens, her advocate, Hyperides, procured her acquittal by suddenly unveiling her charms before the dazzled eyes of the assembled judges. Apelles was at once the painter and the lover of Lais, and Alexander gave him, as the choicest gift, his own favourite concubine, of whom the painter had become enamoured while portraying her. The chief flower-painter of antiquity acquired his skill through his love of the flower-girl Glycera, whom he was accustomed to paint among her garlands. Pindar and Simonides sang the praises of courtesans, and grave philosophers made pilgrimages to visit them, and their names were known in every city.²

¹ According to some writers, the word "venerari" comes from "Venerem exercere," on account of the devotions in the temple of Venus. See Vossius, *Etymologicæ Linguae Latine*, "veneror"; also La Mothe le Vayer, *Lettre* xc.

² On the connection of the courtesans with the

It is not surprising that, in such a state of thought and feeling, many of the more ambitious and accomplished women should have betaken themselves to this career, nor yet that they should have attained the social position which the secluded existence and the enforced ignorance of the Greek wives had left vacant. The courtesan was the one free woman of Athens, and she often availed herself of her freedom to acquire a degree of knowledge which enabled her to add to her other charms an intense intellectual fascination. Gathering around her the most brilliant artists, poets, historians, and philosophers, she flung herself unreservedly into the intellectual and æsthetic enthusiasms of her time, and soon became the centre of a literary society of matchless splendour. Aspasia, who was as famous for her genius as for her beauty, won the passionate love of Pericles. She is said to have instructed him in eloquence, and to have composed some of his most famous orations; she was continually consulted on affairs of state; and Socrates, like other philosophers, attended her assemblies. Socrates himself has owned his deep obligations to the instructions of a courtesan named Diotima. The courtesan Leontium was among the most ardent disciples of Epicurus.¹

Another cause probably contributed indirectly to the elevation of this class, to which it is extremely difficult to allude in an English book, but which it is impossible altogether to omit, even in the most cursory survey of Greek morals. Irregular female connections were looked upon as ordinary and not disgraceful incidents in the life of a good man, for they were compared with that lower abyss of unnatural love which was the deepest and strangest taint of Greek civilisation. This vice, which never appears in the writings of Homer and Hesiod, doubtless arose under the influence of the public games, which, accustoming men to the contemplation of absolutely nude figures,²

artistic enthusiasm, see Raoul Rochette, *Cours d'Archéologie*, pp. 278-279. See, too, Athenæus, xii. 59; Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* xxxv. 40.

¹ See the very curious little work of Ménage, *Historia Mulierum Philosopharum* (Lugduni, 1590); also Ranneville, *La Femme dans l'Antiquité*, p. 244. At a much later date Lucian described the beauty, accomplishments, generosity, and even modesty, of Panthea of Smyrna, the favourite mistress of Lucius Verus.

² The γυμνα, which was at first in use, was discarded by the Lacedæmonians, and afterwards by the other Greeks. There are three curious memoirs tracing the

awoke an unnatural passion,² totally remote from all modern feelings, but which in Greece it was regarded as heroic to resist.³ The popular religion in this, as in other cases, was made to bend to the new vice. Hebe, the cup-bearer of the gods, was replaced by Ganymede, and the worst vices of earth were transported to Olympus.⁴ Artists sought to reflect the passion in their statues of the Hermaphrodite, of Bacchus, and the more effeminate Apollo, moralists were known to praise it as the bond of friendship, and it was spoken of as the inspiring enthusiasm of the heroic Theban legion of Epaminondas.⁵ In general, however, it was stigmatised as unquestionably a vice, but it was treated with a levity we can now hardly conceive. We can scarcely have a better illustration of the extent to which moral ideas and feelings have changed than the fact that the first two Greeks who were considered worthy of statues by their fellow-countrymen are said to have been Harmodius and Aristogeiton, who were united by an impure love, and who were glorified for a political assassination.⁶

It is probable that this cause conspired with the others to dissociate the class of courtesans from the idea of supreme depravity with which they have usually been connected. The great majority, however, were sunk in this, as in all

other ages, in abject degradation;⁷ comparatively few attained the condition of *hetærae*, and even of these it is probable that the greater number exhibited the characteristics which in all ages have attached to their class. Faithlessness, extreme rapacity, and extravagant luxury were common among them; but yet it is unquestionable that there were many exceptions. The excommunication of society did not press upon or degrade them; and though they were never regarded with the same honour as married women, it seems generally to have been believed that the wife and the courtesan had each her place and her function in the world, and her own peculiar type of excellence. The courtesan Leæna, who was a friend of Harmodius, died in torture rather than reveal the conspiracy of her friend; and the Athenians, in allusion to her name, caused the statue of a tongueless lioness to be erected to commemorate her constancy.⁸ The gentle manners and disinterested affection of a courtesan named Bacchis were especially recorded, and a very touching letter paints her character and describes the regret that followed her to the tomb.⁹ In one of the most remarkable of his pictures of Greek life Xenophon describes how Socrates, having heard of the beauty of the courtesan Theodota, went with his disciples to ascertain for himself whether the report was true; how with a quiet humour he questioned her about the sources of the luxury of her dwelling, and how he proceeded to sketch for her the qualities she should cultivate in order to attract her lovers. She ought, he tells her, to shut the door against the insolent, to watch her lovers in sickness, to rejoice greatly when they succeed in anything honourable, to love tenderly those who love her. Having carried on a cheerful and perfectly unembarrassed conversation with her, with no kind of reproach on his part, either expressed or implied, and

history of the change, by M. Burette, in the *Hist. de l'Académie royale des Inscriptions*, tome 1.

² On the causes of paiderastia in Greece, see the remarks of Mr. Grote in the review of the *Symposium*, in his great work on Plato. The whole subject is very ably treated by M. Maury, *Hist. des Religions de la Grèce antique*, tome iii pp. 35-39. Many facts connected with it are collected by Dollinger, in his *Jew and Gentile*, and by Chateaubriand, in his *Etudes historiques*. The chief original authority is the thirteenth book of Athenæus, a book of very painful interest in the history of morals.

³ Plutarch, in his *Life of Agesilaus*, dwells on the intense self-control manifested by that great man in refraining from gratifying a passion he had conceived for a boy named Megabates, and Maximus Tyrius says it deserved greater praise than the heroism of Leonidas. (*Diss.* xxv.) Diogenes Laërtius, in his *Life of Zeno*, the founder of Stoicism, the most austere of all ancient sects, praises that philosopher for being but little addicted to this vice. Sophocles is said to have been much addicted to it.

⁴ Some examples of the ascription of this vice to the divinities are given by Clem. Alex. *Admonitio ad Gent.* Socrates is said to have maintained that Jupiter loved Ganymede for his wisdom, as his name is derived from γάνυμαι and μήδω, to be delighted with prudence (Xenophon, *Banquet*.) The disaster of Cannæ was ascribed to the jealousy of Juno because a beautiful boy was introduced into the temple of Jupiter. (Lactantius, *Inst. Div.* ii. 17.)

⁵ Athenæus, xiii. 78. See, too, the very revolting book on different kinds of love, ascribed (it is said falsely) to Lucian.

⁶ Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* xxxiv. 9.

⁷ There is ample evidence of this in Athenæus, and in the Dialogues of Lucian on the courtesans. See, too, Terence, *The Eunuch*, act v. scene 4, which is copied from the Greek. The majority of the class were not called *hetærae*, but πόρναι.

⁸ Plutarch, *De Garrulitate*; Plin. *Hist. Nat.* xxxiv. 19. The feat of biting out their tongues rather than reveal secrets, or yield to passion, is ascribed to a suspiciously large number of persons. Ménage cites five besides Leæna. (*Hist. Mulier. Philos.* pp. 104-108.)

⁹ See, upon Bacchis, several of the letters of Alciphron, especially the very touching letter (x) on her death, describing her kindness and disinterestedness. Athenæus (xiii. 66) relates a curious anecdote illustrating these aspects of her character.

with' no trace either of the timidity or effrontery of conscious guilt upon hers, the best and wisest of the Greeks left his hostess with a graceful compliment to her beauty.*

My task in describing this aspect of Greek life has been an eminently unpleasing one, and I should certainly not have entered upon even the baldest and most guarded disquisition on a subject so difficult, painful, and delicate had it not been absolutely indispensable to a history of morals to give at least an outline of the progress that has been effected in this sphere. What I have written will sufficiently explain why Greece, which was fertile, beyond all other lands, in great men, was so remarkably barren of great women. It will show, too, that while the Greek moralists recognised, like ourselves, the distinction between the higher and the lower sides of our nature, they differed very widely from modern public opinion in the standard of morals they enforced. The Christian doctrine that it is criminal to gratify a powerful and a transient physical appetite, except under the condition of a lifelong contract, was altogether unknown. Strict duties were imposed upon Greek wives. Duties were imposed at a later period, though less strictly, upon the husband. Unnatural love was stigmatised, but with a levity of censure which to a modern mind appears inexpressibly revolting. Some slight legal disqualifications rested upon the whole class of *hetærae*, and, though more admired, they were less respected than women who had adopted a domestic life; but a combination of circumstances had raised them, in actual worth and in popular estimation, to an unexampled elevation, and an aversion to marriage became very general, and extra-matrimonial connections were formed with the most perfect frankness and publicity.

If we now turn to the Roman civilisation we shall find that some important advances had been made in the condition of women. The virtue of chastity has, as I have shown, been regarded in two different ways. The utilitarian view, which commonly prevails in countries where a political spirit is more powerful than a religious spirit, regards marriage as the ideal state, and to promote the happiness, sanctity, and security of this state is the main object of all its precepts. The

mystical view, which rests upon the natural feeling of shame, and which, as history proves, has prevailed especially where political sentiment is very low and religious sentiment very strong, regards virginity as its true type, and marriage as simply the most pardonable declension from ideal purity. It is, I think, a very remarkable fact that at the head of the religious system of Rome we find two sacerdotal bodies which appear respectively to typify these ideas. The Flamens of Jupiter and the Vestal Virgins were the two most sacred orders in Rome. The ministrations of each were believed to be vitally important to the State. Each could officiate only within the walls of Rome. Each was appointed with the most imposing ceremonies. Each was honoured with the most profound reverence. But in one important respect they differed. The Vestal was the type of virginity, and her purity was guarded by the most terrific penalties. The Flamen, on the other hand, was the representative of Roman marriage in its strictest and holiest form. He was necessarily married. His marriage was celebrated with the most solemn rites. It could only be dissolved by death. If his wife died he was degraded from his office.†

Of these two orders there could be no question that the Flamen was the most faithful expression of the Roman sentiments. The Roman religion was essentially domestic, and it was a main object of the legislator to surround marriage with every circumstance of dignity and solemnity. Monogamy was from the earliest times strictly enjoined; and it was one of the great benefits that have resulted from the expansion of Roman power that it made this type dominant in Europe. In the legends of early Rome we have ample evidence both of the high moral estimate of women and of their prominence in Roman life. The tragedies of Lucretia and of Virginia display a delicacy of honour, a sense of the supreme excellence of unsullied purity, which no Christian nation could surpass. The legends of the Sabine women interceding between their parents and their husbands, and thus saving the infant Republic, and of the mother of Coriolanus averting by her prayers the ruin impending over her country, entitled women

* Xenophon, *Memorab.* iii. 11.

† On the Flamens see Aulus Gell *Noct. x.* 15.

to claim their share in the patriotic glories of Rome. A temple of Venus Calva was associated with the legend of Roman ladies who, in an hour of danger, cut off their long tresses to make bow-strings for the soldiers.¹ Another temple preserved to all posterity the memory of the filial piety of that Roman woman who, when her mother was condemned to be starved to death, obtained permission to visit her in her prison, and was discovered feeding her from her breast.²

The legal position, however, of the Roman wife was for a long period extremely low. The Roman family was constituted on the principle of the uncontrolled authority of its head both over his wife and over his children, and he could repudiate the former at will. Neither the custom of gifts to the father of the bride nor the custom of dowries appears to have existed in the earliest period of Roman history; but the father disposed absolutely of the hand of his daughter, and sometimes even possessed the power of breaking off marriages that had been actually contracted.³ In the forms of marriage, however, which were usual in the earlier periods of Rome, the absolute power passed into the hands of the husband, and he had the right in some cases of putting his wife to death.⁴ Law and public opinion combined in making matrimonial purity most strict. For five hundred and twenty years, it was said, there was no such thing as a divorce in Rome.⁵ Manners were so severe that a senator was censured for indecency because he had kissed his wife in the presence of their daughter.⁶ It was considered in a high degree disgraceful for a Roman mother to delegate to a nurse the duty of suckling her child.⁷ Sumptuary laws regulated with the most minute severity all the details of domestic economy.⁸ The courtesan class, though probably numerous and certainly un-

controlled, were regarded with much contempt. The disgrace of publicly professing themselves members of it was believed to be a sufficient punishment;⁹ and an old law, which was probably intended to teach in symbol the duties of married life, enjoined that no such person should touch the altar of Juno.¹⁰ It was related of a certain ædile that he failed to obtain redress for an assault which had been made upon him because it had occurred in a house of ill-fame, in which it was disgraceful for a Roman magistrate to be found.¹¹ The sanctity of female purity was believed to be attested by all nature. The most savage animals became tame before a virgin.¹² When a woman walked naked round a field caterpillars and all loathsome insects fell dead before her.¹³ It was said that drowned men floated on their backs, and drowned women on their faces; and this, in the opinion of Roman naturalists, was due to the superior purity of the latter.¹⁴

It was a remark of Aristotle that the superiority of the Greeks to the barbarians was shown, among other things, in the fact that the Greeks did not, like other nations, regard their wives as slaves, but treated them as helpmates and companions. A Roman writer has appealed, on the whole with greater justice, to the treatment of wives by his fellow-countrymen as a proof of the superiority of Roman to Greek civilisation. He has observed that while the Greeks kept their wives in a special quarter in the interior of their houses, and never permitted them to sit at banquets except with their relatives, or to see any male except in the presence of a relative, no Roman ever hesitated to lead his wife with him to the feast, or to place the mother of the family at the head of his table.¹⁵

¹ "More inter veteres recepto, qui satis pœnarum adversum impudicas in ipsa professione flagitii credebant." (Tacitus, *Annal.* ii. 85.)

² Aul. Gell. iv. 3. Juno was the goddess of marriage.

³ *Ibid.* iv. 14.

⁴ The well-known superstition about the lion, &c., becoming docile before a virgin is, I believe, as old as Roman times. St. Isidore mentions that rhinoceroses were said to be captured by young girls being put in their way to fascinate them. (Legendre, *Traité de l'Opinion*, tome ii. p. 35.)

⁵ Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* xxviii. 23.

⁶ *Ibid.* vii. 18.

⁷ "Quem enim Romanorum pudet uxorem ducere in convivium? aut cujus materfamilias non primum locum tenet ædium, atque in celebritate versatur? quod multo fit aliter in Græcia. Nam neque in convivium adhibetur, nisi propinquo, neque sedet nisi in interiore parte ædium, quæ *gynaecitis* appellatur, quo nemo accedit, nisi propinqua cognatione conjunctus." (Corn. Nepos, *præfat.*)

¹ Capitolinus, *Maximinus Junior*.

² Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* vii. 36. There is (as is well known) a similar legend of a daughter thus feeding her father. (Val. Max. lib. v. cap. 4.)

³ This appears from the first act of the *Stichus* of Plautus. The power appears to have become quite obsolete during the Empire; but the first legal act (which was rather of the nature of an exhortation than of a command) against it was issued by Antoninus Pius, and it was only definitely abolished under Diocletian. (Laboulaye, *Recherches sur la condition civile et politique des Femmes*, pp. 16-17.)

⁴ Aul. Gell. *Noct.* x. 23.

⁵ Val. Maximus, ii. 1, § 4; Aul. Gellius, *Noct.* iv. 3.

⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, xxvii. 4.

⁷ Tacitus, *De Oratoribus*, xxviii.

⁸ See Aulus Gellius, *Noct.* ii. 24.

Whether, in the period when wives were completely subject to the rule of their husbands, much domestic oppression occurred it is now impossible to say. A goddess named Viriplaca, whose mission was to appease husbands, was worshipped by Roman women in a temple on the Palatine;¹ and a strange and improbable, if not incredible, story is related by Livy of the discovery during the Republic of a vast conspiracy by Roman wives to poison their husbands.² On the whole, however, it is probable that the Roman matron was from the earliest period a name of honour;³ that the beautiful sentence of a jurisconsult of the Empire, who defined marriage as a lifelong fellowship of all divine and human rights,⁴ expressed most faithfully the feelings of the people, and that female virtue had in every age a considerable place in Roman biographies.⁵

I have already enumerated the chief causes of that complete dissolution of Roman morals which began shortly after the Punic Wars, which contributed very largely to the destruction of the Republic, and which attained its climax under the Cæsars. There are few examples in history of a revolution pervading so completely every sphere of religious, domestic, social, and political life. Philosophical scepticism corroded the ancient religions. An inundation of Eastern luxury and Eastern morals submerged all the old habits of austere simplicity. The civil wars and the Empire degraded the character of the people, and the exaggerated prudery of republican manners only served to make the rebound into vice the more irresistible. In the fierce outburst of ungovernable and almost frantic depravity that marked this evil period the violations of female virtue were infamously prominent. The vast multiplication of slaves, which is in every age peculiarly fatal to moral purity; the fact that a great proportion of those slaves were chosen from the most voluptuous provinces of the Empire; the games of Flora, in which races of naked courtesans were exhibited; the pantomimes, which derived their charms chiefly from

the audacious indecencies of the actors; the influx of the Greek and Asiatic hetærae, who were attracted by the wealth of the metropolis; the licentious paintings which began to adorn every house; the rise of Baræ, which rivalled the luxury and surpassed the beauty of the chief centres of Asiatic vice, combining with the intoxication of great wealth suddenly acquired, with the disruption, through many causes, of all the ancient habits and beliefs, and with the tendency to pleasure which the closing of the paths of honourable political ambition by the imperial despotism naturally produced, had all their part in preparing those orgies of vice which the writers of the Empire reveal. Most scholars will, I suppose, retain a vivid recollection of the new insight into the extent and wildness of human guilt which they obtained when they first opened the pages of Suetonius or Lampridius; and the sixth Satire of Juvenal paints with a fierce energy, though probably with the natural exaggeration of a satirist, the extent to which corruption had spread among the women. It was found necessary, under Tiberius, to make a special law prohibiting members of noble houses from enrolling themselves as prostitutes.⁶ The extreme coarseness of the Roman disposition prevented sensuality from assuming that æsthetic character which had made it in Greece the parent of art, and had very profoundly modified its influence; while the passion for gladiatorial shows often allied it somewhat unnaturally with cruelty. There have certainly been many periods in history when virtue was more rare than under the Cæsars; but there has probably never been a period when vice was more extravagant or uncontrolled. Young emperors especially, who were surrounded by swarms of sycophants and panders, and who often lived in continual dread of assassination, plunged with the most reckless and feverish excitement into every variety of abnormal lust. The reticence which has always more or less characterised modern society and modern writers was unknown; and the unblushing, undisguised obscenity of the Epigrams of Martial, of the Romances of Apuleius and Petronius, and of some of the Dialogues of Lucian, reflected but too faithfully the spirit of their time.

¹ Val. Max. ii. 1, § 6.

² Liv. viii. 18.

³ See Val. Max. ii. 1.

⁴ "Nuptiæ sunt conjunctio maris et feminae, et consortium omnis vitæ, divini et humani juris communicatio." (Modestinus.)

⁵ Livy, xxxiv. 5. There is a fine collection of legends or histories of heroic women (but chiefly Greek) in Clem. Alexand. Strom. iv. 19.

⁶ Tacitus. *Annal.* ii. 85. This decree was on account of a patrician lady named Vistilia having so enrolled herself.

There had arisen, too, partly through vicious causes and partly, I suppose, through the unfavourable influence which the attraction of the public institutions exercised on domestic life, a great and general indisposition towards marriage, which Augustus attempted in vain to arrest by his laws against celibacy, and by conferring many privileges on the fathers of three children.¹ A singularly curious speech is preserved, which is said to have been delivered on this subject shortly before the close of the Republic, by Metellus Numidicus, in order, if possible, to overcome this indisposition. "If, Romans," he said, "we could live without wives, we should all keep free from that source of trouble; but since nature has ordained that men can neither live sufficiently agreeably with wives, nor at all without them, let us consider the perpetual endurance of our race rather than our own brief enjoyment."²

In the midst of this torrent of corruption a great change was passing over the legal position of Roman women. They had at first been in a condition of absolute subjection or subordination to their relations. They arrived, during the Empire, at a point of freedom and dignity which they subsequently lost, and have never altogether regained. The Romans recognised two distinct classes of marriages: the stricter and, in the eyes of the law, more honourable forms, which placed the woman "in the hand" of her husband, and gave him an almost absolute authority over her person and her property; and a less strict form, which left her legal position unchanged. The former, which were general during the Republic, were of three kinds—the "confarreatio," which was celebrated and could only be dissolved by the most solemn religious ceremonies, and was jealously restricted to patricians; the

"coemptio," which was purely civil, and derived its name from a symbolical sale; and the "usus," which was effected by the mere cohabitation of a woman with a man without interruption for the space of a year. Under the Empire, however, these kinds of marriage became almost wholly obsolete; a laxer form, resting upon a simple mutual agreement, without any religious or civil ceremony, was general, and it had this very important consequence, that the woman so married remained, in the eyes of the law, in the family of her father, and was under his guardianship, not under the guardianship of her husband. But the old *patria potestas* had become completely obsolete, and the practical effect of the general adoption of this form of marriage was the absolute legal independence of the wife. With the exception of her dowry, which passed into the hands of her husband, she held her property in her own right; she inherited her share of the wealth of her father, and she retained it altogether independently of her husband. A very considerable portion of Roman wealth thus passed into the uncontrolled possession of women. The private man of business of the wife was a favourite character with the comedians, and the tyranny exercised by rich wives over their husbands—to whom, it is said, they sometimes lent money at high interest—a continual theme of satirists.³

A complete revolution had thus passed over the constitution of the family. Instead of being constructed on the principle of autocracy, it was constructed on the principle of coequal partnership. The legal position of the wife had become one of complete independence, while her social position was one of great dignity. The more conservative spirits were naturally alarmed at the change, and two measures were taken to arrest it. The Oppian law was designed to restrain the luxury of women; but, in spite of the strenuous exertions of Cato, this law was speedily repealed.⁴ A more important measure was the Voconian law, which restricted within very narrow limits the property

¹ Dion Cassius, liv. 16, lvi. 10.

² "Si sine uxore possemus, Quintes, esse, omnes ea molestia careremus; sed quoniam ita natura tradidit, ut nec cum illis satis commode nec sine illis ullo modo vivi possit, salutis perpetuæ potius quam brevis voluptatis consulendum." (Aulus Gellius, *Noct. i. 6*.) Some of the audience, we are told, thought that, in exhorting to matrimony, the speaker should have concealed its undoubted evils. It was decided, however, that it was more honourable to tell the whole truth. Stobæus (*Sententiae*) has preserved a number of harsh and often heartless sayings about wives, that were popular among the Greeks. It was a saying of a Greek poet that "marriage brings only two happy days—the day when the husband first clasps his wife to his breast, and the day when he lays her in the tomb", and in Rome it became a proverbial saying that a wife was only good "in thalamo vel in tumulo."

³ Friedländer, *Hist. des Mœurs romaines*, tome i. pp. 360–364. On the great influence exercised by Roman ladies on political affairs some remarkable passages are collected in Denis, *Hist. des Idées Morales*, tome ii. pp. 98–99. This author is particularly valuable in all that relates to the history of domestic morals. The *Amatoria* of Plautus, and some of the epigrams of Martial, throw much light upon this subject.

⁴ See the very remarkable discussion about this repeal in Livy, lib. xxxiv. cap. 1–8.

which women might inherit; but public opinion never fully acquiesced in it, and by several legal subterfuges its operation was partially evaded.¹

Another and a still more important consequence resulted from the changed form of marriage. Being looked upon merely as a civil contract, entered into for the happiness of the contracting parties, its continuance depended upon mutual consent. Either party might dissolve it at will, and the dissolution gave both parties a right to remarry. There can be no question that under this system the obligations of marriage were treated with extreme levity. We find Cicero repudiating his wife Terentia, because he desired a new dowry;² Augustus compelling the husband of Livia to repudiate her when she was already pregnant, that he might marry her himself;³ Cato ceding his wife, with the consent of her father, to his friend Hortensius, and resuming her after his death;⁴ Mæcenas continually changing his wife;⁵ Sempronius Sophus repudiating his wife because she had once been to the public games without his knowledge;⁶ Paulus Æmilius taking the same step without assigning any reason, and defending himself by saying, "My shoes are new and well made, but no one knows where they pinch me."⁷ Nor did women show less alacrity in repudiating their husbands. Seneca denounced this evil with especial vehemence, declaring that divorce in Rome no longer brought with it any shame, and that there were women who reckoned their years rather by their husbands than by the consuls.⁸ Christians and pagans echoed the same complaint. According to Tertullian, "divorce is the fruit of marriage."⁹ Martial speaks of a woman who had already arrived at her tenth husband;¹⁰ Juvenal of a woman having eight husbands in five years.¹¹ But the most extraordinary recorded in-

stance of this kind is related by St. Jerome, who assures us that there existed at Rome a wife who was married to her twenty-third husband, she herself being his twenty-first wife.¹²

These are, no doubt, extreme cases; but it is unquestionable that the stability of married life was very seriously impaired. It would be easy, however, to exaggerate the influence of legal changes in affecting it. In a purer state of public opinion a very wide latitude of divorce might probably have been allowed to both parties without any serious consequence. The right of repudiation, which the husband had always possessed, was, as we have seen, in the Republic never or very rarely exercised. Of those who scandalised good men by the rapid recurrence of their marriages, probably most, if marriage had been indissoluble, would have refrained from entering into it, and would have contented themselves with many informal connections, or, if they had married, would have gratified their love of change by simple adultery. A vast wave of corruption had flowed in upon Rome, and under any system of law it would have penetrated into domestic life. Laws prohibiting all divorce have never secured the purity of married life in ages of great corruption, nor did the latitude which was accorded in imperial Rome prevent the existence of a very large amount of female virtue.

I have observed, in a former chapter, that the moral contrasts shown in ancient life surpass those of modern societies, in which we very rarely find clusters of heroic or illustrious men arising in nations that are in general very ignorant or very corrupt. I have endeavoured to account for this fact by showing that the moral agencies of antiquity were in general much more fitted to develop virtue than to repress vice, and that they raised noble natures to almost the highest conceivable point of excellence, while they entirely failed to coerce or to attenuate the corruption of the depraved. In the female life of imperial Rome we find these contrasts vividly displayed. There can be no question that the moral tone of the sex was extremely low—lower, probably, than in France under the Regency, or in England under the Restoration—and it is also certain that frightful excesses of unnatural passion, to which the most

¹ Legouvé, *Hist. morale des Femmes*, pp. 23-26. St. Augustine denounced this law as the most unjust that could be mentioned or even conceived. "Qua lege quid iniquius dici aut cogitari possit, ignoro" (St. Aug. *De Civ. Dei*, iii. 21)—a curious illustration of the difference between the habits of thought of his time and those of the Middle Ages, when daughters were habitually sacrificed, without a protest, by the feudal laws.

² Plutarch, *Cicero*.

³ Tacit. *Ann.* i. 10.

⁴ Plutarch, *Cato*; Lucan, *Pharsal.* ii.

⁵ Senec. *Ep.* cxiv.

⁶ Val. Max. vi. 7.

⁷ Plutarch, *Paul. Emil.* It is not quite clear whether this remark was made by Paulus himself.

⁸ Sen. *De Benef.* iii. 16. See, too, *Ep.* xcvi. *Ad. Helv.* xvi.

⁹ Apol. 6.

¹⁰ *Epig.* vi. 7.

¹¹ *Juv. Sat.* vi. 230.

¹² *Ep.* 2.

corrupt of modern courts present no parallel, were perpetrated with but little concealment on the Palatine. Yet there is probably no period in which examples of conjugal heroism and fidelity appear more frequently than in this very age, in which marriage was most free and in which corruption was so general. Much simplicity of manners continued to co-exist with the excesses of an almost unbridled luxury. Augustus, we are told, used to make his daughters and grand-daughters weave and spin, and his wife and sister made most of the clothes he wore.¹ The skill of wives in domestic economy, and especially in spinning, was frequently noticed in their epitaphs.² Intellectual culture was much diffused among them,³ and we meet with several noble specimens in the sex of large and accomplished minds united with all the gracefulness of intense womanhood and all the fidelity of the truest love. Such were Cornelia, the brilliant and devoted wife of Pompey,⁴ Marcia, the friend, and Helvia, the mother of Seneca. The northern Italian cities had in a great degree escaped the contamination of the times, and Padua and Brescia were especially noted for the virtue of their women.⁵ In an age of extravagant sensuality a noble lady, named Mallonia, plunged a dagger in her heart rather than yield to the embraces of Tiberius.⁶ To the period when the legal bond of marriage was most relaxed must be assigned most of those noble examples of the constancy of Roman wives which have been for so many generations household tales among mankind. Who has not read with emotion of the tenderness and heroism of Porcia, claiming her right to share in the trouble which clouded her husband's brow; how, doubting her own courage, she did not venture to ask Brutus to reveal to her his enterprise till she had secretly tried her power of endurance by piercing her thigh with a knife; how once, and but once in his presence, her noble spirit failed, when, as she was about to separate from him for the last time, her eye chanced to fall upon

a picture of the parting interview of Hector and Andromache? Paulina, the wife of Seneca, opened her own veins in order to accompany her husband to the grave; when much blood had already flowed, her slaves and freedmen bound her wounds, and thus compelled her to live; but the Romans ever after observed with reverence the sacred pallor of her countenance—the memorial of her act.⁷ When Pætus was condemned to die by his own hand, those who knew the love which his wife Arria bore him, and the heroic fervour of her character, predicted that she would not long survive him. Thrasea, who had married her daughter, endeavoured to dissuade her from suicide by saying, "If I am ever called upon to perish, would you wish your daughter to die with me?" She answered, "Yes, if she will then have lived with you as long and as happily as I with Pætus." Her friends attempted, by carefully watching her, to secure her safety; but she dashed her head against the wall with such force that she fell upon the ground, and then, rising up, she said, "I told you I would find a hard way to death if you refused me an easy way." All attempts to restrain her were then abandoned, and her death was, perhaps, the most majestic in antiquity. Pætus for a moment hesitated to strike the fatal blow; but his wife, taking the dagger, plunged it deeply into her own breast, and then, drawing it out, gave it, all reeking as it was, to her husband, exclaiming, with her dying breath, "My Pætus, it does not pain."⁸

The form of the elder Arria towers grandly above her fellows; but many other Roman wives in the days of the early Cæsars and of Domitian exhibited a very similar fidelity. Over the dark waters of the Euxine, into those unknown and inhospitable regions from which the Roman imagination recoiled with a peculiar horror, many noble ladies freely followed their husbands; and there were some wives who refused to survive them.⁹ The younger Arria was the faithful companion of Thrasea during his heroic life, and when he died she was only persuaded to live that she might bring up their daughters.¹⁰ She spent the closing days

¹ Sueton. *Aug.* Charlemagne, in like manner, made his daughters work in wool. (*Eginhardus, Vit. Car. Mag.* xix.)

² Friedländer, *Mœurs romaines du règne d'Auguste à la fin des Antonins* (trad. franç.), tome i. p. 414.

³ Much evidence of this is collected by Friedländer, tome i. pp. 387-395.

⁴ Plutarch, *Pompeius*.

⁵ Martial, xi. 16. Pliny, *Ep.* i. 14.

⁶ Suet. *Tiberius*, xlv.

⁷ Plutarch, *Brutus*.

⁸ Tacit. *Annal.* xv. 63, 64.

⁹ "Pæte, non dolet." (*Plin. Ep.* iii. 16, Martial, *Ep.* i. 14.)

¹⁰ Tacit. *Annal.* xvi. 10-11; *Hist.* l. 3. See, too, Friedländer, tome i. p. 406.

¹¹ Tacit. *Ann.* xvi. 34.

of her life with Domitian in exile ;¹ while her daughter, who was as remarkable for the gentleness as for the dignity of her character,² went twice into exile with her husband Helvidius, and was once banished, after his death, for defending his memory.³ Incidental notices in historians, and a few inscriptions which have happened to remain, show us that such instances were not uncommon, and in Roman epitaphs no feature is more remarkable than the deep and passionate expressions of conjugal love that continually occur.⁴ It would be difficult to find a more touching image of that love than the medallion which is so common on the Roman sarcophagi, in which husband and wife are represented together, each with an arm thrown fondly over the shoulder of the other, united in death as they had been in life, and meeting it with an aspect of perfect calm, because they were companions in the tomb.

In the latter days of the pagan Empire some measures were taken to repress the profligacy that was so prevalent. Domitian enforced the old Scantian law against unnatural love.⁵ Vespasian moderated the luxury of the court ; Macrinus caused those who had committed adultery to be bound together and burnt alive.⁶ A practice of men and women bathing together was condemned by Hadrian, and afterwards by Alexander Severus, but was only finally suppressed by Constantine. Alexander Severus and Philip waged an energetic war against panders.⁷ The extreme excesses of this, as of most forms of vice, were probably much diminished after the accession of the Antonines ; but Rome continued to be a centre of very great corruption till the influence of Christianity, the removal of the court to Constantinople, and the impoverishment that followed the barbarian conquests in a measure corrected the evil.

Among the moralists, however, some important steps were taken. One of the most important was a very clear assertion of the reciprocity of that obligation to fidelity in marriage which in the early

stages of society had been imposed almost exclusively upon wives.¹ The legends of Clytemnestra and of Medea reveal the feelings of fierce resentment which were sometimes produced among Greek wives by the almost unlimited indulgence that was accorded to their husbands ;² and it is told of Andromache, as the supreme instance of her love of Hector, that she cared for his illegitimate children as much as for her own.³ In early Rome the obligations of husbands were never, I imagine, altogether unfelt ; but they were rarely or never enforced, nor were they ever regarded as bearing any kind of equality to those imposed upon the wife. The term adultery, and all the legal penalties connected with it, were restricted to the infractions by a wife of the nuptial tie. Among the many instances of magnanimity recorded of Roman wives few are more touching than that of Tertia Æmilia, the faithful wife of Scipio. She discovered that her husband had become enamoured of one of her slaves ; but she bore her pain in silence, and when he died she gave liberty to her captive, for she could not bear that she should remain in servitude whom her dear lord had loved.⁴

Aristotle had clearly asserted the duty of husbands to observe in marriage the same fidelity as they expected from their wives,⁵ and at a later period both Plutarch and Seneca enforced this duty in the strongest and most unequivocal manner.⁶

¹ In the oration against Neæra, which is ascribed to Demosthenes, but is of doubtful genuineness, the licence accorded to husbands is spoken of as a matter of course : "We keep mistresses for our pleasures, concubines for constant attendance, and wives to bear us legitimate children, and to be our faithful house-keepers."

² There is a remarkable passage on the feelings of wives, in different nations, upon this point, in Athenæus, xiii. 3. See, too, Plutarch, *Conj. Pæc.*

³ Euripid *Andromache*.

⁴ Valer. Max. vi. 7, § 1. Some very scandalous instances of cynicism on the part of Roman husbands are recorded. Thus, Augustus had many mistresses, "Quæ (virginæ) sibi undique etiam ab uxore conquirerentur." (Sueton. *Aug.* lxxi.) When the wife of Verus, the colleague of Marcus Aurelius, complained of the tastes of her husband, he answered, "Uxor enim dignitatis nomen est, non voluptatis." (Spartian. *Verus*.)

⁵ Aristotle, *Econom.* i. 4-8-9.

⁶ Plutarch enforces the duty at length, in his very beautiful work on marriage. In case husbands are guilty of infidelity, he recommends their wives to preserve a prudent blindness, reflecting that it is out of respect for them that they choose another woman as the companion of their intemperance. Seneca touches briefly, but unequivocally, on the subject : "Scis improbum esse qui ab uxore pudicitiam exigit, ipse alienarum corruptor uxorum. Scis ut illi nil cum adultero, sic nihil tibi esse debere cum pellice." (*Ep.* xciv.) "Sciet in uxorem gravissimum esse genus injuriæ, habere pellicem." (*Ep.* xcv.)

¹ Pliny mentions her return after the death of the tyrant (*Ep.* iii. 11).

² "Quod paucis datum est, non minus a nobis quam veneranda." (Plin. *Ep.* vii. 19.)

³ See Plin. *Ep.* vii. 19. Dion Cassius and Tacitus relate the exiles of Helvidius, who appears to have been rather intemperate and unreasonable.

⁴ Friedländer gives many and most touching examples, tome i. pp. 410-414.

⁵ Suet. *Dom.* viii.

⁶ Capitolinus, *Macrinus*.

⁷ Lampadius, *A. Severus*.

The degree to which, in theory at least, it won its way in Roman life is shown by its recognition as a legal maxim by Ulpian,¹ and by its appearance in a formal judgment of Antoninus Pius, who, while issuing at the request of a husband a condemnation for adultery against a guilty wife, appended to it this remarkable condition: "Provided always it is established that by your life you gave her an example of fidelity. It would be unjust that a husband should exact a fidelity he does not himself keep."²

Another change, which may be dimly descried in the later pagan society, was a tendency to regard purity rather in a mystical point of view, as essentially good, than in the utilitarian point of view. This change resulted chiefly from the rise of the Neo-Platonic and Pythagorean philosophies, which concurred in regarding the body, with its passions, as essentially evil, and in representing all virtue as a purification from its taint. Its most important consequence was a somewhat stricter view of pre-nuptial unchastity, which in the case of men, and when it was not excessive and did not take the form of adultery, had previously been uncensured, or was looked upon with a disapprobation so slight as scarcely to amount to censure. The elder Cato had expressly justified it;³ and Cicero has left us an extremely curious judgment on the subject, which shows at a glance the feelings of the people, and the vast revolution that, under the influence of Christianity, has been effected in, at least, the professions of mankind. "If there be anyone," he says, "who thinks that young men should be altogether restrained from the love of courtesans, he is indeed very severe. I am not prepared to deny his position; but he differs not only from the licence of our age, but also from the customs and allowances of our ancestors. When, indeed, was this not done? When was it blamed? When was it not allowed? When was that which is now lawful not lawful?"⁴ Epictetus, who on

most subjects was among the most austere of the Stoics, recommends his disciples to abstain "as far as possible" from pre-nuptial connections, and at least from those which were adulterous and unlawful, but not to blame those who were less strict.⁵ The feeling of the Romans is curiously exemplified in the life of Alexander Severus, who, of all the emperors, was probably the most energetic in legislating against vice. When appointing a provincial governor he was accustomed to provide him with horses and servants, and, if he was unmarried, with a concubine, "because," as the historian very gravely observes, "it was impossible that he could exist without one."⁶

What was written among the pagans in opposition to these views was not much, but it is worthy of notice, as illustrating the tendency that had arisen. Musonius Rufus distinctly and emphatically asserted that no union of the sexes other than marriage was permissible.⁷ Dion Chrysostom desired prostitution to be suppressed by law.⁸ The ascetic notion of the impurity even of marriage may be faintly traced. Apollonius of Tyana lived, on this ground, a life of celibacy.⁹ Zenobia refused to cohabit with her husband except so far as was necessary for the production of an heir.¹⁰ Hypatia is said, like many Christian saints, to have maintained the position of a virgin wife.¹¹ The belief in the impurity of all

severus; negare non possum; sed abhorret non modo ab hujus sæculi licentia, verum etiam a majorum consuetudine atque concessis. Quando enim hoc factum non est? Quando reprehensum? Quando non permissum? Quando denique fuit ut quod licet non liceret?" (Cicero, *Pro Celio*, cap. xx.) The whole speech is well worthy of the attention of those who would understand Roman feelings on these matters; but it should be remembered that it is the speech of a lawyer defending a dissolute client.

¹ Περὶ ἀφροδίσια, εἰς δύναμιν πρὸ γάμου καθαρυντέον. ἀπτομένῳ δὲ, ὡν νομιμὸν ἐστὶ, μεταληπτέον, μὴ μὲν τοῖ ἐπαχθῆς γίνου τοῖς χρωμένοις, μηδὲ ἐλέγκτικὸς, μηδὲ πολλαχοῦ τό, ὅτι αὐτὸς οὐ χρῆ, παράφερε. (*Enchir.* xxxiii.)

² "Et si uiores non habereant, singulas concubinas, quod sine his esse non possent." (Lampadius, *A. Severus*.) We have an amusing picture of the common tone of people of the world on this matter in the speech Apuleius puts into the mouth of the gods, remonstrating with Venus for being angry because her son formed a connection with Psyche (*Metam.* lib. v.).

³ Preserved by Stobæus. See Denis, *Hist. des Idées morales dans l'Antiquité*, tome ii. pp. 134-136, 140-150.

⁴ Philo. *Apol.* i. 13. When a saying of Pythagoras, "that a man should only have commerce with his own wife," was quoted, he said that this concerned others.

⁵ Trebellius Pollio, *Zenobia*.

⁶ This is asserted by an anonymous writer quoted by Suidas. See Ménage, *Hist. Mulierum Philosopharum*, um. p. 58.

¹ "Periniquum enim videtur esse, ut pudicitiam vir ab uxore exigat, quam ipse non exhibeat." (*Cod. Just. Dig.* xlviii. 5-13.)

² Quoted by St Augustine, *De Cony. Adult.* ii. 19. Plautus, long before, had made one of his characters complain of the injustice of the laws which punished unchaste wives but not unchaste husbands, and ask why, since every honest woman is contented with one husband, every honest man should not be contented with one wife? (*Mercator*, act iv. scene 5.)

³ Horace, *Sat.* i. 2.

⁴ "Verum si quis est qui etiam meretricis amoribus interdictum juventuti putet, est illi quidem valde

corporeal things, and in the duty of rising above them, was in the third century strenuously enforced.¹ Marcus Aurelius and Julian were both admirable representatives of the best pagan spirit of their time. Each of them lost his wife early, each was eulogised by his biographer for the virtue he manifested after her death, but there is a curious and characteristic difference in the forms which that virtue assumed. Marcus Aurelius, we are told, did not wish to bring into his house a stepmother to rule over his children, and accordingly took a concubine.² Julian ever after lived in perfect continence.³

The foregoing facts, which I have given in the most condensed form, and almost unaccompanied by criticism or by comment, will be sufficient, I hope, to exhibit the state of feeling of the Romans on this subject, and also the direction in which that feeling was being modified. Those who are familiar with this order of studies will readily understand that it is impossible to mark out with precision the chronology of a moral sentiment; but there can be no question that in the latter days of the Roman Empire the perceptions of men on this subject became more subtle and more refined than they had previously been, and it is equally certain that the Oriental philosophies which had superseded Stoicism largely influenced the change.⁴ Christianity soon constituted itself the representative of the new tendency. It regarded purity as the most important of all virtues, and it strained to the utmost all the vast agencies it possessed to enforce it. In the legislation of the first Christian emperors we find many traces of a fiery zeal. Panders were condemned to have molten lead poured down their throats. In the case of rape, not only the ravisher, but even the injured person, if she consented to the act, was put to death.⁵ A great service was done to the cause both of purity and philanthropy by a law which permitted actresses, on receiving baptism, to abandon their profession, which had been made a form of slavery, and was virtually a slavery to vice.⁶ Certain musical girls, who were accustomed to sing or play at the banquets of the rich, and who were regarded with extreme

horror by the Fathers, were suppressed, and a very stringent law forbade the revival of the class.⁷

Side by side with the civil legislation, the penitential legislation of the Church was exerted in the same direction. Sins of unchastity probably occupy a larger place than any others in its enactments. The cases of unnatural love, and of mothers who had made their daughters courtesans, were punished by perpetual exclusion from communion, and a crowd of minor offences were severely visited. The ascetic passion increased the prominence of this branch of ethics, and the imaginations of men were soon fascinated by the pure and noble figures of the virgin martyrs of the Church, who on more than one occasion fully equalled the courage of men, while they sometimes mingled with their heroism traits of the most exquisite feminine gentleness. For the patient endurance of excruciating physical suffering Christianity produced no more sublime figure than Blandina, the poor servant-girl who was martyred at Lyons; and it would be difficult to find in all history a more touching picture of natural purity than is contained in one simple incident of the martyrdom of St. Perpetua. It is related of that saint that she was condemned to be slaughtered by a wild bull, and, as she fell half dead from its horns upon the sand of the arena, it was observed that even in that awful moment her virgin modesty was supreme, and her first instinctive movement was to draw together her dress, which had been torn in the assault.⁸

¹ "Fidicinam nulli liceat vel emere vel docere vel vendere, vel convivius aut spectaculis adhibere. Nec cuiquam aut delectationis desiderio erudita feminea aut musicæ artis studio liceat habere mancipia" (*Cod. Theod.* xv. 7, 10). This curious law was issued in A. D. 385. St. Jerome said these musicians were the chorus of the devil, and quite as dangerous as the sirens. See the comments on the law.

² Ruinart, *Act. S. Perpetuæ*. These acts are, I believe, generally regarded as authentic. There is nothing more instructive in history than to trace the same moral feelings through different ages and religions; and I am able in this case to present the reader with an illustration of their permanence, which I think somewhat remarkable. The younger Pliny gives in one of his letters a pathetic account of the execution of Cornelia, a vestal virgin, by the order of Domitian. She was buried alive for incest; but her innocence appears to have been generally believed; and she had been condemned unheard, and in her absence. As she was being lowered into the subterranean cell her dress was caught and deranged in the descent. She turned round and drew it to her, and when the executioner stretched out his hand to assist her, she started back lest he should touch her, for this, according to the received opinion, was a pollution; and even in the supreme moment of her agony her vestal purity shrank from the unholy contact. (*Plin. Ep.* 17.

¹ See, e.g., Plotinus, 1st Eun. vi. 6.

² Capitolinus, *M. Aurelius*.

³ Amm. Marcell. xxv. 4.

⁴ *Cod. Theod.* lib. ix tit. 24.

⁵ *Ibid.* lib. xv. tit. 7.

A crowd of very curious popular legends also arose, which, though they are for the most part without much intrinsic excellence, have their importance in history, as showing the force with which the imaginations of men were turned in this direction, and the manner in which Christianity was regarded as the great enemy of the passions of the flesh. Thus, St. Jerome relates an incredible story of a young Christian being, in the Diocletian persecution, bound with ribands of silk in the midst of a lovely garden, surrounded by everything that could charm the ear and the eye, while a beautiful courtesan assailed him with her blandishments, against which he protected himself by biting out his tongue and spitting it in her face.¹ Legends are recounted of young Christian men assuming the garb and manners of libertines that they might obtain access to maidens who had been condemned to vice, exchanging dresses with them, and thus enabling them to escape.² St. Agnes was said to have been stripped naked before the people, who all turned away their eyes except one young man, who instantly became blind.³ The sister of St. Gregory of Nyssa was afflicted with a cancer in her breast, but could not bear that a surgeon should see it, and was rewarded for her modesty by a miraculous cure.⁴ To the fabled zone of beauty the Christian saints opposed their zones of chastity, which extinguished the passion of the wearer, or would only meet around the pure.⁵ Dæmons were

said not unfrequently to have entered into the profligate. The garment of a girl who was possessed was brought to St. Pachomius, and he discovered from it that she had a lover.⁶ A courtesan accused St. Gregory Thaumaturgus of having been her lover, and having refused to pay her what he had promised. He paid the required sum, but she was immediately possessed by a dæmon.⁷ The efforts of the saints to reclaim courtesans from the path of vice created a large class of legends. St. Mary Magdalene, St. Mary of Egypt, St. Afra, St. Pelagia, St. Thais, and St. Theodota, in the early Church, as well as St. Marguerite of Cortona and Clara of Rimini in the Middle Ages, had been courtesans.⁸ St. Vitahus, it is said, was accustomed every night to visit the dens of vice in his neighbourhood, to give the inmates money to remain without sin for that night, and to offer up prayers for their conversion.⁹ It is related of St. Serapion that, as he was passing through a village in Egypt, a courtesan beckoned to him. He promised at a certain hour to visit her. He kept his appointment, but declared that there was a duty which his order imposed on him. He fell down on his knees and began repeating the Psalter, concluding every psalm with a prayer for his hostess. The strangeness of the scene, and the solemnity of his tone and manner, overawed and fascinated her. Gradually her tears began to flow. She knelt beside him and began to join in his prayers. He heeded her not, but hour after hour continued in the same stern and solemn voice, without rest and without interruption, to repeat his alternate prayers and psalms, till her repentance rose to a paroxysm of terror, and, as the grey morning streaks began to illumine the horizon, she fell half dead at his feet, imploring him with broken sobs to lead her anywhere where she might expiate the sins of her past.¹⁰

groom unloosed in the nuptial bed, and hence "zonam solvere" became a proverbial expression for "pudicitiam mulieris immutare." (Nieupoort, *De Ritibus Romanorum*, p. 479; Alexander's *History of Women*, vol. ii. p. 300.)

¹ *Vita Pauli*.

² St. Ambrose relates an instance of this, which he says occurred at Antioch (*De Virginitate*, lib. ii. cap. iv.). When the Christian youth was being led to execution, the girl whom he had saved reappeared and died with him. Eusebius tells a very similar story, but places the scene at Alexandria.

³ See Ceiller, *Hist. des Auteurs ecclésiastiques*, tome iii. p. 533.

⁴ *Ibid.* tome viii. pp. 204-207.

⁵ Among the Irish saints St. Colman is said to have had a girdle which would only meet around the chaste, and which was long preserved in Ireland as a relic (Colgan, *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniæ*, Louvain, 1645, vol. i. p. 246); and St. Fursa's a girdle that extinguished lust. (*Ibid.* p. 292.) The girdle of St. Thomas Aquinas seems to have had some miraculous properties of this kind. (See his *Life* in the *Hollandists*, Sept. 29.) Among both the Greeks and Romans it was customary for the bride to be girt with a girdle, which the bride-

⁶ See his *Life*, by Gregory of Nyssa.

⁷ A little book has been written on these legends by M. Charles de Bussy, called *Les Courtisanes saintes*. There is said to be some doubt about St. Afra, for, while her Acts represent her as a reformed courtesan, St. Fortunatus, in two lines he has devoted to her, calls her a virgin. (Ozanam, *Études germaniques*, tome ii. p. 8.)

⁸ See the *Vita Sancti Joannis Eleemosynarii* (Rosweyde).

⁹ *Illemonst*, tome x. pp. 61-62. There is also a very

11) If we now pass back several centuries, we find Euripides attributing to Polyxena a trait precisely similar to that which was attributed to Perpetua. As she fell beneath the sword of the executioner, it was observed that her last care was that she might fall with decency.

ἡ δὲ καὶ θνησκούσῃ
πολλὴν πρόνοιαν εἶχεν εὐχόμενος πεσεῖν,
κρύπτουσι δὲ κρύπτειν ὅματ' ἄρσενων χρεῶν.
—Euripides, *Hec.* 566-568.

But the services rendered by the ascetics in imprinting on the minds of men a profound and enduring conviction of the importance of chastity, though extremely great, were seriously counter-balanced by their noxious influence upon marriage. Two or three beautiful descriptions of this institution have been culled out of the immense mass of the patristic writings;¹ but, in general, it would be difficult to conceive anything more coarse or more repulsive than the manner in which they regarded it.² The relation which nature has designed for the noble purpose of repairing the ravages of death, and which, as Linnaeus has shown, extends even through the world of flowers, was invariably treated as a consequence of the fall of Adam, and marriage was regarded almost exclusively in its lowest aspect. The tender love which it elicits, the holy and beautiful domestic qualities that follow in its train, were almost absolutely omitted from consideration.³ The object of the ascetic was to attract men to a life of virginity, and, as a necessary consequence, marriage was treated as an inferior state. It was regarded as being necessary, indeed, and therefore justifiable, for the propagation of the species, and to free men from greater evils; but still as a condition of degradation, from which all who aspired to real sanctity should fly. To "cut down by the axe of Virginity the wood of Marriage" was, in the energetic language of St. Jerome, the end of the saint,⁴ and if he consented to praise marriage it was merely because it produced virgins.⁵ Even when the bond had been formed the ascetic passion

retained its sting. We have already seen how it embittered other relations of domestic life. Into this, the holiest of all, it infused a tenfold bitterness. Whenever any strong religious fervour fell upon a husband or a wife, its first effect was to make a happy union impossible. The more religious partner immediately desired to live a life of solitary asceticism, or at least, if no ostensible separation took place, an unnatural life of separation in marriage. The immense place this order of ideas occupies in the hortatory writings of the Fathers, and in the legends of the saints, must be familiar to all who have any knowledge of this department of literature. Thus—to give but a very few examples—St. Nilus, when he had already two children, was seized with a longing for the prevailing asceticism, and his wife was persuaded, after many tears, to consent to their separation.¹ St. Ammon, on the night of his marriage, proceeded to greet his bride with an harangue upon the evils of the married state, and they agreed, in consequence, at once to separate.² St. Melania laboured long and earnestly to induce her husband to allow her to desert his bed before he would consent.³ St. Abraham ran away from his wife on the night of his marriage.⁴ St. Alexis, according to a somewhat later legend, took the same step, but many years after returned from Jerusalem to his father's house, in which his wife was still lamenting her desertion, begged and received a lodging as an act of charity, and lived there unrecognised and unknown till his death.⁵ St. Gregory of Nyssa—who was so unfortunate as to be married—wrote a glowing eulogy of virginity, in the course of which he mournfully observed that this privileged state could never be his. He resembled, he assures us, an ox that was ploughing a field, the fruit of which he must never enjoy; or a thirsty man, who was gazing on a stream of which he never could drink; or a poor man, whose poverty seems the more bitter as he con-

picturesque legend of the manner in which St. Paphnutius converted the courtesan Thais.

¹ See, especially, Tertullian, *Ad Uxorem*. It was beautifully said, at a later period, that woman was not taken from the head of man, for she was not intended to be his ruler, nor from his feet, for she was not intended to be his slave, but from his side, for she was to be his companion and his comfort. (Peter Lombard, *Senten.* lib. ii. dis. 18.)

² The reader may find many passages on this subject in Barbeyrac, *Morale des Pères*, ii. § 7, iii. § 8, iv. §§ 31-35; vi. § 31; viii. §§ 2-8.

³ "It is remarkable how rarely, if ever (I cannot call to mind an instance), in the discussions of the comparative merits of marriage and celibacy, the social advantages appear to have occurred to the mind. It is always argued with relation to the interests and the perfection of the individual soul; and, even with regard to that, the writers seem almost unconscious of the softening and humanising effect of the natural affections, the beauty of parental tenderness and filial love." (Milman's *Hist. of Christianity*, vol. iii. p. 196.)

⁴ "Tempus breve est, et jam securus ad radices arborum posita est, quæ silvam legis et nuptiarum evangelica castitate succedat." (*Ep. cxviii.*)

⁵ "Laudo nuptias, laudo conjugium, sed quia mihi virgines generant." (*Ep. xxii.*)

¹ See Ceillier, *Auteurs ecclésiastiques* xvi p. 147.

² Socrates, iv. 23.

³ Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* cx.x.

⁴ *Vit. S. Abr.* (Rosweyde), cap. i.

⁵ I do not know when this legend first appeared. M. Littré mentions having found it in a French MS. of the eleventh century (Littré, *Les Barbares*, pp. 123-124); and it also forms the subject of a very curious fresco, I imagine of a somewhat earlier date, which was discovered, within the last few years, in the subterranean church of St. Clement at Rome. An account of it is given by Father Molloly, in his interesting little book about that church.

afterwards, in defiance of the religious feelings of his people, determined to raise her to the position of a wife.¹

The subject of the celibacy of the clergy, in which the ecclesiastical feelings about marriage were also shown, is an extremely large one, and I shall not attempt to deal with it, except in a most cursory manner.² There are two facts connected with it which every candid student must admit. The first is, that in the earliest period of the Church the privilege of marriage was accorded to the clergy. The second is, that a notion of the impurity of marriage existed, and that it was felt that the clergy, as pre-eminently the holy class, should have less licence than laymen. The first form this feeling took appears in the strong conviction that a second marriage of a priest, or the marriage of a priest with a widow, was unlawful and criminal.³ This belief seems to have existed from the earliest period of the Church, and was retained with great tenacity and unanimity through many centuries. In the next place we find from an extremely early date an opinion that it was an act of virtue, at a later period that it was an act of duty, for priests after ordination to abstain from cohabiting with their wives. The Council of Nice refrained, by the advice of Paphnutius, who was himself a scrupulous celibate, from imposing this last rule as a matter of necessity;⁴ but in the course of the fourth century it was a recognised principle that clerical marriages were criminal. They were celebrated, however, habitually, and usually

with the greatest openness. The various attitudes assumed by the ecclesiastical authorities in dealing with this subject form an extremely curious page of the history of morals, and supply the most crushing evidence of the evils which have been produced by the system of celibacy. I can at present, however, only refer to the vast mass of evidence which has been collected on the subject, derived from the writings of Catholic divines and from the decrees of Catholic Councils during the space of many centuries. It is a popular illusion, which is especially common among writers who have little direct knowledge of the Middle Ages, that the atrocious immorality of monasteries, in the century before the Reformation, was a new fact, and that the ages when the faith of man was undisturbed were ages of great moral purity. In fact, it appears, from the uniform testimony of the ecclesiastical writers, that ecclesiastical immorality in the eighth and three following centuries was little, if at all, less outrageous than at any other period, while the Papacy, during almost the whole of the tenth century, was held by men of infamous lives. Simony was nearly universal.⁵ Barbarian chieftains married at an early age, and totally incapable of restraint, occupied the leading positions in the Church, and gross irregularities speedily became general. An Italian bishop of the tenth century epigrammatically described the morals of his time when he declared that, if he were to enforce the canons against unchaste people administering ecclesiastical rites, no one would be left in the Church except the boys; and if he were to observe the canons against bastards, these also must be excluded.⁶ The evil acquired such magnitude that a great feudal clergy, bequeathing the ecclesiastical benefices from father to son, appeared more than once likely to arise.⁷ A tax called "culgium," which was in fact a licence to clergymen to keep concubines, was during several centuries systematically levied by princes.⁸ Sometimes the evil, by its very extension, corrected itself. Priestly marriages were looked upon as normal events

¹ Perrone, *De Matrimonio*, tome iii. p. 102.

² This subject has recently been treated with very great learning and with admirable impartiality by an American author, Mr. Henry C. Lea, in his *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy* (Philadelphia, 1867), which is certainly one of the most valuable works that America has produced. Since the great history of Dean Milman I know no work in English which has thrown more light on the moral condition of the Middle Ages, and none which is more fitted to dispel the gross illusions concerning that period which High Church writers, and writers of the Positive school, have conspired to sustain.

³ See Lea, p. 36. The command of St. Paul, that a bishop or deacon should be the husband of *one* wife (1 Tim. iii. 2-12), was believed by all ancient and by many modern commentators to be prohibitory of second marriages; and this view is somewhat confirmed by the widows who were to be honoured and supported by the Church, being only those who had been but once married (1 Tim. v. 9). See Pressensé, *Hist. des trois premiers siècles* (première série), tome ii. p. 233. Among the Jews it was ordained that the high priest should not marry a widow. (Levit. xxi. 13-14.)

⁴ Socrates, *H. E.* i. 11. The Council of Illyris (can. xxxiii.) had ordained this, but both the precepts and the practice of divines varied greatly. A brilliant summary of the chief facts is given in Milman's *History of Early Christianity*, vol. iii. pp. 277-282.

⁵ See, on the state of things in the tenth and eleventh centuries, Lea, pp. 162-192.

⁶ Rutherus, quoted by Lea, p. 151.

⁷ See some curious evidence of the extent to which the practice of the hereditary transmission of ecclesiastical offices was carried in Lea, pp. 149, 150, 266, 299, 339.

⁸ Lea, pp. 271, 292, 422.

not implying any guilt, and in the eleventh century several instances are recorded in which they were not regarded as any impediment to the power of working miracles.¹ But this was a rare exception. From the earliest period a long succession of Councils, as well as such men as St. Boniface, St. Gregory the Great, St. Peter Damiani, St. Dunstan, St. Anselm, Hildebrand, and his successors in the Popedom, denounced priestly marriage or concubinage as an atrocious crime, and the habitual life of the priests was, in theory at least, generally recognised as a life of sin.

It is not surprising that, having once broken their vows, and begun to live what they deemed a life of habitual sin, the clergy should soon have sunk far below the level of the laity. We may not lay much stress on such isolated instances of depravity as that of Pope John XXIII., who was condemned, among many other crimes, for incest and for adultery;² or the abbot-elect of St. Augustine, at Canterbury, who in 1171 was found on investigation to have seventeen illegitimate children in a single village;³ or an abbot of St. Pelayo, in Spain, who in 1130 was proved to have kept no less than seventy concubines;⁴ or Henry III., Bishop of Liège, who was deposed in 1274 for having sixty-five illegitimate children;⁵ but it is impossible to resist the evidence of a long chain of Councils and ecclesiastical writers who conspire in depicting far greater evils than simple concubinage. It was observed that when the priests actually took wives the knowledge that these connections were illegal was peculiarly fatal to their fidelity, and bigamy and extreme mobility of attachments were especially common among them. The writers of the Middle Ages are full of accounts of nunneries that were like brothels, of the vast multitude of infants within their walls, and of that inveterate prevalence of incest among the clergy which rendered it necessary again and again to issue the most stringent enactments that priests should not be permitted to live with their mothers or sisters. Unnatural love, which it had been one of the great services of Christianity almost to eradicate from the world, is more than once spoken of as lingering in the monasteries; and shortly

before the Reformation complaints became loud and frequent of the employment of the confessional for the purposes of debauchery.⁶ The measures taken on the subject were very numerous and severe. At first the evil chiefly complained of was the clandestine marriage of priests, and especially their intercourse with wives whom they had married previous to their ordination. Several Councils issued their anathemas against priests "who had improper relations with their wives;" and rules were made that priests should always sleep in the presence of a subordinate clerk; and that they should only meet their wives in the open air, and before at least two witnesses. Men were, however, by no means unanimous in their way of regarding this matter. Synesius, when elected to a bishopric, at first declined, boldly alleging as one of his reasons that he had a wife whom he loved dearly, and who he hoped would bear him many sons, and that he did not mean to separate from her or visit her secretly as an adulterer.⁷ A Bishop of Laon, at a later date, who was married to a niece of St. Rémy, and who remained with his wife till after he had a son and a daughter, quaintly expressed his penitence by naming them respectively *Latro* and *Vulpecula*.⁸ St. Gregory the Great describes the virtue of a priest who, through motives of piety, had discarded his wife. As he lay dying she hastened to him to watch the bed which for forty years she had not been allowed to share, and, bending over what seemed the inanimate form of her husband, she tried to ascertain whether any breath still remained, when the dying saint, collecting his last energies, exclaimed, "Woman, begone; take away the straw; there is fire yet."⁹ The destruction of priestly marriage is chiefly due to Hildebrand, who pursued this object with the most untiring resolution. Finding that his appeals to the ecclesiastical authorities, and to the civil rulers were insufficient, he boldly turned to the people, exhorted them, in defiance of all Church traditions, to withdraw their obedience from married

¹ The reader may find the most ample evidence of these positions in Lea. See especially pp. 138, 141, 153, 155, 260, 344.

² Synesius, *Ep.* cv.

³ Lea, p. 122. St. Augustine had named his illegitimate son Adeodatus, or the Gift of God, and had made him a principal interlocutor in one of his religious dialogues.

⁴ *Dialog.* iv. 12

¹ Lea, pp. 186-187.

² *Ibid.* p. 338.

³ *Ibid.* p. 322.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 296.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 349.

priests, and kindled among them a fierce fanaticism of asceticism, which speedily produced a fierce persecution of the offending pastors. Their wives, in immense numbers, were driven forth with hatred and with scorn; and many crimes and much intolerable suffering followed the disruption. The priests sometimes strenuously resisted. At Cambrai, in A.D. 1077, they burnt alive as a heretic a zealot who was maintaining the doctrines of Hildebrand. In England, half a century later, they succeeded in surprising a Papal legate in the arms of a courtesan a few hours after he had delivered a fierce denunciation of clerical unchastity.¹ But Papal resolution, supported by popular fanaticism, won the victory. Pope Urban II. gave licence to the nobles to reduce to slavery the wives whom priests had obstinately refused to abandon, and after a few more acts of severity priestly marriage became obsolete. The extent, however, of the disorders that still existed is shown by the mournful confessions of ecclesiastical writers, by the uniform and indignant testimony of the poets and prose satirists who preceded the Reformation, by the atrocious immoralities disclosed in the monasteries at the time of their suppression, and by the significant prudence of many lay Catholics, who were accustomed to insist that their priest should take a concubine, for the protection of the families of his parishioners.²

It is scarcely possible to conceive a more demoralising influence than a priesthood living such a life as I have

described. In Protestant countries, where the marriage of the clergy is fully recognised, it has, indeed, been productive of the greatest and the most unequivocal benefits. Nowhere, it may be confidently asserted, does Christianity assume a more beneficial or a more winning form than in those gentle clerical households which stud our land, constituting, as Coleridge said, "the one idyll of modern life," the most perfect type of domestic peace, the centre of civilisation in the remotest village. Notwithstanding some class narrowness and professional bigotry, notwithstanding some unworthy but half-unconscious mannerism which is often most unjustly stigmatised as hypocrisy, it would be difficult to find in any other quarter so much happiness at once diffused and enjoyed, or so much virtue attained with so little tension or struggle. Combining with his sacred calling a warm sympathy with the intellectual, social, and political movements of his time; possessing the enlarged practical knowledge of a father of a family, and entering with a keen zest into the occupations and the amusements of his parishioners, a good clergyman will rarely obtrude his religious convictions into secular spheres, but yet will make them apparent in all. They will be revealed by a higher and deeper moral tone, by a more scrupulous purity in word and action, by an all-pervasive gentleness which refines and softens and mellows, and adds as much to the charm as to the excellence of the character in which it is displayed. In visiting the sick, relieving the poor, instructing the young, and discharging a thousand delicate offices for which a woman's tact is especially needed, his wife finds a sphere of labour which is at once intensely active and intensely feminine, and her example is not less beneficial than her ministrations.

Among the Catholic priesthood, on the other hand, where the vow of celibacy is faithfully observed, a character of a different type is formed, which with very grave and deadly faults combines some of the noblest excellences to which humanity can attain. Separated from most of the ties and affections of earth, viewing life chiefly through the distorted medium of the casuist or the confessional, and deprived of those relationships which more than any others soften and expand the character, the Catholic priests have been but too often conspicuous for their fierce

¹ This is mentioned by Henry of Huntingdon, who was a contemporary. (Lea, p. 293.)

² The first notice of this very remarkable precaution is in a canon of the Council of Palencia (in Spain), held in 1322, which anathematizes laymen who compel their pastors to take concubines (Lea, p. 324.) Siedan mentions that it was customary in some of the Swiss cantons for the parishioners to oblige the priest to select a concubine as a necessary precaution for the protection of his female parishioners. (*Ibid.* p. 355.) Sarpi, in his *Hist. of the Council of Trent*, mentions (on the authority of Zuinglius) this Swiss custom. Nicolas de Clemangis, a leading member of the Council of Constance, declared that this custom had become very common, that the laity were firmly persuaded that priests never lived a life of real celibacy, and that, where no proofs of concubinage were found, they always assumed the existence of more serious vice. The passage (which is quoted by Bayle) is too remarkable to be omitted. "Taceo de fornicationibus et adulteris a quibus qui alieni sunt probro ceteris ac ludibrio esse solent, spadonesque aut sodomitæ appellantur; denique laici usque adeo persuasum habent nullos cœlibes esse, ut in perisque parochus non alter velint presbyterum tolerare nisi concubinam habeat, quo vel sic suis sit consultum uxoris, quæ nec sic quidem usquequaque sunt extra periculum." (Nic. de Clem. *De Præsul. Simoniac.* Lea, p. 385.)

and sanguinary fanaticism, and for their indifference to all interests except those of their Church; while the narrow range of their sympathies, and the intellectual servitude they have accepted, render them peculiarly unfitted for the office of educating the young, which they so persistently claim, and which, to the great misfortune of the world, they were long permitted to monopolise. But, on the other hand, no other body of men have ever exhibited a more single-minded and unworldly zeal, refracted by no personal interests, sacrificing to duty the dearest of earthly objects, and confronting with undaunted heroism every form of hardship, of suffering, and of death.

That the Middle Ages, even in their darkest periods, produced many good and great men of the latter type it would be unjust and absurd to deny. It can hardly, however, be questioned that the extreme frequency of illicit connections among the clergy tended during many centuries most actively to lower the moral tone of the laity, and to counteract the great services in the cause of purity which Christian teaching had undoubtedly effected. The priestly connections were rarely so fully recognised as to enable the mistress to fill a position like that which is now occupied by the wife of a clergyman, and the spectacle of the chief teachers and exemplars of morals living habitually in an intercourse which was acknowledged to be ambiguous or wrong must have acted most injuriously upon every class of the community. Asceticism, proclaiming war upon human nature, produced a revulsion towards its extreme opposite, and even when it was observed it was frequently detrimental to purity of mind. The habit of continually looking upon marriage in its coarsest light, and of regarding the propagation of the species as its one legitimate end, exercised a peculiarly perverting influence upon the imagination. The exuberant piety of wives who desired to live apart from their husbands often drove the latter into serious irregularities.¹ The notion of sin was introduced into the dearest of relationships,² and the whole subject was

distorted and degraded. It is one of the great benefits of Protestantism that it did much to banish these modes of thought and feeling from the world, and to restore marriage to its simplicity and its dignity. We have a gratifying illustration of the extent to which an old superstition has declined in the fact that when Goldsmith, in his great romance, desired to depict the harmless eccentricities of his simple-minded and unworldly vicar, he represented him as maintaining that opinion concerning the sinfulness of the second marriage of a clergyman which was for many centuries universal in the Church.

Another injurious consequence resulting, in a great measure, from asceticism, was a tendency to depreciate extremely the character and the position of women. In this tendency we may detect in part the influence of the earlier Jewish writings, in which an impartial observer may find evident traces of the common Oriental depreciation of women. The custom of purchase-money to the father of the bride was admitted. Polygamy was authorised,³ and practised by the wisest man on an enormous scale. A woman was regarded as the origin of human ills. A period of purification was appointed after the birth of every child; but, by a very significant provision, it was twice as long in the case of a female as of a male child.⁴ "The badness of men," a Jewish writer emphatically declared, "is better than the goodness of women."⁵ The types of female excellence exhibited in the early period of Jewish history are in general of a low order, and certainly far inferior to those of Roman history or Greek poetry; and the warmest eulogy of a woman in the Old Testament is probably that which was bestowed upon her who, with circumstances of the most aggravated treachery, had murdered the sleeping fugitive who had taken refuge under her roof.

juges conveniunt sic excusatur coitus ut culpam non habeat. Quando vero deficiente bono proli fide tamen servata conveniunt causa continentiae non sic excusatur ut non habeat culpam, sed venialem. . . Item hoc quod conjugati victi concupiscentia utuntur invicem, ultra necessitatem liberos procreandi, ponam in his pro quibus quotidie dicimus, Dimitte nobis debita nostra. Unde in sententiis Sexti Pythagorici legitur 'omnis ardentior amator propriae uxoris adulter est.'" (Peter Lombard, *Sentent.* lib. iv. dist. 31.)

¹ Many wives, however, were forbidden. (Deut. xvii. 17.) Polygamy is said to have ceased among the Jews after the return from the Babylonish captivity. (Whewell's *Elements of Morality*, book iv. ch. v.)

² Levit. xii. 1-5.

³ Ecclesiasticus, xlii. 14. I believe, however, the passage has been translated, "Better the badness of a man than the blandishments of a woman."

¹ This was energetically noticed by Luther, in his famous sermon "De Matrimonio," and some of the Catholic preachers of an earlier period had made the same complaint. See a curious passage from a contemporary of Boccaccio, quoted by Meray, *Les Livres-prêchers*, p. 155. "Vast numbers of laymen separated from their wives under the influence of the ascetic enthusiasm which Hildebrand created." (Lea, p. 254.)

² "Quando enim servata fide thori causa proli con-

The combined influence of the Jewish writings, and of that ascetic feeling which treated women as the chief source of temptation to man, was shown in those fierce invectives which form so conspicuous and so grotesque a portion of the writings of the Fathers, and which contrast so curiously with the adulation bestowed upon particular members of the sex. Woman was represented as the door of hell, as the mother of all human ills. She should be ashamed at the very thought that she is a woman. She should live in continual penance on account of the curses she has brought upon the world. She should be ashamed of her dress, for it is the memorial of her fall. She should be especially ashamed of her beauty, for it is the most potent instrument of the dæmon. Physical beauty was indeed perpetually the theme of ecclesiastical denunciations, though one singular exception seems to have been made; for it has been observed that in the Middle Ages the personal beauty of bishops was continually noticed upon their tombs.² Women were even forbidden by a provincial Council, in the sixth century, on account of their impurity, to receive the Eucharist into their naked hands.³ Their essentially subordinate position was continually maintained. It is probable that this teaching had its part in determining the principles of legislation concerning the sex. The pagan laws during the Empire had been continually repealing the old disabilities of women, and the legislative movement in their favour continued with unabated force from Constantine to Justinian, and appeared also in some of the early laws of the barbarians.⁴ But in the whole feudal legislation women were placed in a much lower legal position than in the pagan Empire.⁵ In addition to the

personal restrictions which grew necessarily out of the Catholic doctrines concerning divorce, and concerning the subordination of the weaker sex, we find numerous and stringent enactments, which rendered it impossible for women to succeed to any considerable amount of property, and which almost reduced them to the alternative of marriage or a nunnery.⁶ The complete inferiority of the sex was continually maintained by the law; and that generous public opinion which in Rome had frequently revolted against the injustice done to girls, in depriving them of the greater part of the inheritance of their fathers, totally disappeared. Wherever the canon law has been the basis of legislation, we find laws of succession sacrificing the interests of daughters and of wives,⁷ and a state of public opinion which has been formed and regulated by these laws; nor was any serious attempt made to abolish them till the close of the last [eighteenth] century. The French Revolutionists, though rejecting the proposal of Siéyès and Condorcet to accord political emancipation to women, established at least an equal succession of sons and daughters, and thus initiated a great reformation of both law and opinion, which sooner or later must traverse the world.

In their efforts to raise the standard of purity the Christian teachers derived much assistance from the incursions and the conquests of the barbarians. The dissolution of vast retinues of slaves, the suspension of most public games, and the general impoverishment that followed the invasions, were all favourable to female virtue; and in this respect the various tribes of barbarians, however violent and lawless, were far superior to the more civilised community. Tacitus, in a very famous work, had long before portrayed in the most flattering colours the purity

² This curious fact is noticed by Le Blant, *Inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule*, pp. xcvi-xcviil.

³ See the decree of a Council of Auxerre (A.D. 578), can. 36.

⁴ See the last two chapters of Troplong, *Influences du Christianisme sur le Droit* (a work, however, which is written much more in the spirit of an apologist than in that of an historian), and Legouvé, pp. 27-29.

⁵ Even in matters not relating to property, the position of women in feudalism was a low one. "Tout mari," says Beaumanoir, "peut battre sa femme quand elle ne veut pas obéir à son commandement, ou quand elle le maudit, ou quand elle le dément, pourvu que ce soit modérément et sans que mort s'ensuive" (quoted by Legouvé, p. 148). Contrast with this the saying of the elder Cato: "A man who beats his wife or his children lays impious hands on that which is most holy and most sacred in the world," (Plutarch, *Marcus Cato*.)

⁶ See Legouvé, pp. 29-38; Maine's *Ancient Law*, pp. 151-159.

⁷ "No society which preserves any tincture of Christian institutions is likely to restore to married women the personal liberty conferred on them by the middle Roman law; but the proprietary disabilities of married females stand on quite a different basis from their personal incapacities, and it is by keeping alive and consolidating the former that the expositors of the canon law have deeply injured civilisation. There are many vestiges of a struggle between the secular and ecclesiastical principles; but the canon law nearly everywhere prevailed." (Maine's *Ancient Law*, p. 158.) I may observe that the Russian law was early very favourable to the proprietary rights of married women. See a remarkable letter in the *Memoirs of the Princess Daschkaw* (edited by Mrs. Bradford; London, 1840), vol. ii. p. 404.

of the Germans. Adultery, he said, was very rare among them. The adulteress was driven from the house with shaven hair, and beaten ignominiously through the village. Neither youth, nor beauty, nor wealth could enable a woman who was known to have sinned to secure a husband. Polygamy was restricted to the princes, who looked upon a plurality of wives rather as a badge of dignity than as a gratification of the passions. Mothers invariably gave suck to their own children. Infanticide was forbidden. Widows were not allowed to remarry. The men feared captivity much more for their wives than for themselves; they believed that a sacred and prophetic gift resided in women; they consulted them as oracles, and followed their counsels.¹

It is generally believed, and it is not improbable, that Tacitus in this work intended to reprove the dissolute habits of his fellow-countrymen, and considerably over-coloured the virtue of the barbarians. Of the substantial justice, however, of his picture we have much evidence. Salvian, who, about three centuries later, witnessed and described the manners of the barbarians who had triumphed over the Empire, attested in the strongest language the contrast which their chastity presented to the vice of those whom they had subdued.² The Scandinavian mythology abounds in legends exhibiting the clear sentiment of the heathen tribes on the subject of purity, and the awful penalties threatened in the next world against the seducers.³ The barbarian women were accustomed to practise medicine and to interpret dreams, and they also very frequently accompanied their husbands to battle, rallied their broken forces, and even themselves took part in the fight.⁴ Augustus had discovered that it was useless to keep barbarian chiefs as hostages, and that the one way of securing the fidelity of traitors was by taking their wives, for these, at least, were never sacrificed. Instances of female heroism are said to have occurred in the conquered nations, which might rival the most splendid in the Roman annals. When Marius had vanquished an army of the Teutons their

wives besought the conqueror to permit them to become the servants of the Vestal Virgins, in order that their honour, at least, might be secure in slavery. Their request was refused, and that night they all perished by their own hands.⁵ A powerful noble once solicited the hand of a Galatian lady named Camma, who, faithful to her husband, resisted all his entreaties. Resolved at any hazard to succeed, he caused her husband to be assassinated, and when she took refuge in the temple of Diana, and enrolled herself among the priestesses, he sent noble after noble to induce her to relent. After a time he ventured himself into her presence. She feigned a willingness to yield, but told him it was first necessary to make a libation to the goddess. She appeared as a priestess before the altar, bearing in her hand a cup of wine, which she had poisoned. She drank half of it herself, handed the remainder to her guilty lover, and, when he had drained the cup to the dregs, burst into a fierce thanksgiving that she had been permitted to avenge, and was soon to rejoin, her murdered husband.⁶ Another and still more remarkable instance of conjugal fidelity was furnished by a Gaulish woman named Epponina. Her husband, Julius Sabinus, had rebelled against Vespasian; he was conquered, and might easily have escaped to Germany, but could not bear to abandon his young wife. He retired to a villa of his own, concealed himself in subterranean cellars that were below it, and instructed a freedman to spread the report that he had committed suicide, while, to account for the disappearance of his body, he set fire to the villa. Epponina, hearing of the suicide, for three days lay prostrate on the ground without eating. At length the freedman came to her and told her that the suicide was feigned. She continued her lamentations by day, but visited her husband by night. She became with child, but owing, it is said, to an ointment, she succeeded in concealing her state from her friends. When the hour of parturition was at hand she went alone into the cellar, and without any assistance or attendance was delivered of twins, whom she brought up underground. For nine years she fulfilled her task, when Sabinus was discovered, and, to the lasting disgrace of Vespasian, was

¹ *Germania*, cap. ix. xviii.-xx.

² *De Gubernatione Dei*.

³ See, for these legends, Mallet's *Northern Antiquities*.

⁴ Tacitus, *Germ.* 9; *Hist.* iv. 18; Xiphilin. lxxi. 3; Amm. Marcellinus, xv. 12; Vopiscus, *Aurelianus*; Florus, iii. 3.

⁵ Valer. Max. vi. 1; Hieron. *Ep.* cxxiii.

⁶ Plutarch, *De Mulier. Virt.*

executed, in spite of the supplications of his wife, who made it her last request that she might be permitted to die with him.¹

The moral purity of the barbarians was of a kind altogether different from that which the ascetic movement inculcated. It was concentrated exclusively upon marriage. It showed itself in a noble conjugal fidelity; but it was little fitted for a life of celibacy, and did not, as we have seen, prevent excessive disorders among the priesthood. The practice of polygamy among the barbarian kings was also for some centuries unchecked, or at least unsuppressed, by Christianity. The kings Caribert and Chilperic had both many wives at the same time.² Clotaire married the sister of his first wife during the lifetime of the latter, who, on the intention of the king being announced, is reported to have said, "Let my lord do what seemeth good in his sight, only let thy servant live in thy favour."³ Theodebert, whose general goodness of character is warmly extolled by the episcopal historian, abandoned his first wife on account of an atrocious crime which she had committed; took, during her lifetime, another, to whom he had previously been betrothed; and upon the death of this second wife, and while the first was still living, took a third, whom, however, at a later period he murdered.⁴ St. Columbanus was expelled from Gaul chiefly on account of his denunciations of the polygamy of King Thierry.⁵ Dagobert had three wives, as well as a multitude of concubines.⁶ Charlemagne himself had at the same time two wives, and he indulged largely in concubines.⁷ After this period examples of this nature became rare. The popes and the bishops exercised a strict supervision over domestic morals, and strenuously, and in most cases successfully, opposed the attempts of kings and nobles to repudiate their wives.

But, notwithstanding these startling facts, there can be no doubt that the general purity of the barbarians was from

the first superior to that of the later Romans, and it appears in many of their laws. It has been very happily observed¹ that the high value placed on this virtue is well illustrated by the fact that in the Salic code, while a charge of cowardice falsely brought against a man was only punished by a fine of three solidi, a charge of unchastity falsely brought against a woman was punished by a fine of forty-five. The Teutonic sentiment was shown in a very stern legislation against adultery and rape,² and curiously minute precautions were sometimes taken to guard against them. A law of the Spanish Visigoths prohibited surgeons from bleeding any free woman except in the presence of her husband, of her nearest relative, or at least of some properly-appointed witness; and a Salic law imposed a fine of fifteen pieces of gold upon anyone who improperly pressed her hand.³

Under the influence of Christianity, assisted by the barbarians, a vast change passed gradually over the world. The vice we are considering was probably more rare; it certainly assumed less extravagant forms, and it was screened from observation with a new modesty. The theory of morals had become clearer, and the practice was somewhat improved. The extreme grossness of literature had disappeared, and the more glaring violations of marriage were always censured and often repressed. The penitential discipline and the exhortations of the pulpit diffused abroad an immeasurably higher sense of the importance of purity than pagan antiquity had known. St. Gregory the Great, following in the steps of some pagan philosophers, strenuously urged upon mothers the duty of themselves suckling their children;⁴ and many minute and stringent precepts were made against extravagances of dress and manners. The religious institutions of Greece and Asia Minor, which had almost consecrated prostitution, were for ever abolished, and the courtesan sank into a lower stage of degradation.

Besides these changes, the duty of reciprocal fidelity in marriage was enforced

¹ Plutarch, *Amatorius*; Xiphilin. lxxvi. 16; Tacit. *Hist.* iv. 67. The name of this heroic wife is given in three different forms.

² On the polygamy of the first, see Greg. Tur. iv. 26; on the polygamy of Chilperic, Greg. Tur. iv. 28; v. 14.

³ Greg. Tur. iv. 3.

⁴ *Ibid.* iii. 25-27, 36.

⁵ Fredegarius, xxvi.

⁶ *Ibid.* lx.

⁷ Eginhardus, *Vit. Car. Mag.* xviii. Charlemagne had, according to Eginhard, four wives, but, as far as I can understand, only two at the same time.

¹ Smyth's *Lectures on Modern History*, vol. i. pp. 61-62.

² Milman's *Hist. of Latin Christianity*, vol. i. p. 363; Legouvé, *Hist. Morale des Femmes*, p. 57.

³ See, on these laws, Lord Kames, *On Women*; Legouvé, p. 57.

⁴ Favorinus had strongly urged it. (Aul. Gell. *Noct. xii.* 1.)

with a new earnestness. The contrast between the levity with which the frailty of men has in most ages been regarded, and the extreme severity with which women who have been guilty of the same offence have generally been treated, forms one of the most singular anomalies in moral history, and appears the more remarkable when we remember that the temptation usually springs from the sex which is so readily pardoned; that the sex which is visited with such crushing penalties is proverbially the weaker, and that in the case of women, but not in the case of men, the vice is very commonly the result of the most abject misery and poverty. For this disparity of censure several reasons have been assigned. The offence can be more surely and easily detected, and therefore more certainly punished, in the case of women than of men; and, as the duty of providing for his children falls upon the father, the introduction into the family of children who are not his own is a special injury to him, while illegitimate children who do not spring from adultery will probably, on account of their father having entered into no compact to support them, ultimately become criminals or paupers, and, therefore, a burden to society.¹ It may be added, I think, that several causes render the observance of this virtue more difficult for one sex than for the other; that its violation, when every allowance has been made for the moral degradation which is a result of the existing condition of public opinion, is naturally more profoundly prejudicial to the character of women than of men; and also that much of our feeling on these subjects is due to laws and moral systems which were formed by men, and were in the first instance intended for their own protection.

The passages in the Fathers asserting the equality of the obligation imposed upon both sexes are exceedingly unequivocal;² and, although the doctrine itself

had been anticipated by Seneca and Plutarch, it had probably never before, and it has never since, been so fully realised as in the early Church. It cannot, however, be said that the conquest has been retained. At the present day, although the standard of morals is far higher than in pagan Rome, it may be questioned whether the inequality of the censure which is bestowed upon the two sexes is not as great as in the days of paganism, and that inequality is continually the cause of the most shameful and the most pitiable injustice. In one respect, indeed, a great retrogression resulted from chivalry, and long survived its decay. The character of the seducer, and especially of the passionless seducer who pursues his career simply as a kind of sport, and under the influence of no stronger motive than vanity or a spirit of adventure, has been glorified and idealised in the popular literature of Christendom in a manner to which we can find no parallel in antiquity. When we reflect that the object of such a man is by the coldest and most deliberate treachery to blast the lives of innocent women; when we compare the levity of his motive with the irreparable injury he inflicts; and when we remember that he can only deceive his victim by persuading her to love him, and can only ruin her by persuading her to trust him, it must be owned that it would be difficult to conceive a cruelty more wanton and more heartless, or a character combining more numerous elements of infamy and of dishonour. That such a character should for many centuries have been the popular ideal of a considerable section of literature, and the boast of numbers who most plumed themselves upon their honour, is assuredly one of the most mournful facts in history, and it represents a moral deflection certainly not less than was revealed in ancient Greece by the position that was assigned to the courtesan.

The fundamental truth that the same act can never be at once venial for a man to demand, and infamous for a woman to accord, though nobly enforced by the early Christians, has not passed into the popular sentiment of Christendom. The mystical character, however, which the Church imparted to marriage has been extremely influential. Partly by raising it into a sacrament, and partly by representing it as, in some mysterious and not very definable sense, an image of the

¹ These are the reasons given by Malthus, *On Population*, book iii. ch. ii.

² St. Augustine (*De Conj. Adult.* ii. 19) maintains that adultery is even more criminal in the man than in the woman. St. Jerome has an impressive passage on the subject: "Aliæ sunt leges Cæsarum, aliæ Christi; aliud Papianus, aliud Paulus nostri præcepit. Apud illos viris impudicitia fræna laxantur et solo stupro atque adulterio condemnato passim per lupanaria et ancillulas libido permittitur, quasi culpam dignitas faciat non voluntas. Apud nos quod non licet feminis æque non licet viris; et eadem servitus pari conditione censetur." (*Ep.* lxxvii.) St. Chrysostom writes in a similar strain.

union of Christ with his Church, a feeling was fostered that a lifelong union of one man and one woman is, under all circumstances, the single form of intercourse between the sexes which is not illegitimate; and this conviction has acquired the force of a primal moral intuition.

There can, I think, be little doubt that, in the stringency with which it is usually laid down, it rests not upon the law of nature, but upon positive law, although unassisted nature is sufficient to lead men many steps in this direction. Considering the subject simply in the light of unaided reason, two rules comprise the whole duty of man. He must abstain from whatever injures happiness or degrades character. Under the first head he must include the more remote as well as the immediate consequences of his act. He must consider how his partner will be affected by the union, the light in which society will view the connection, the probable position of the children to be born, the effect of these births, and also the effect of his example upon the well-being of society at large. Some of the elements of this calculation vary in different stages of society. Thus public opinion in one age will reprobate, and therefore punish, connections which in another age are fully sanctioned; and the probable position of the children, as well as the effect of the births upon society, will depend greatly upon particular and national circumstances.

Under the second head is comprised the influence of this intercourse in clouding or developing the moral feelings, lowering or elevating the tone of character, exciting or allaying the aberrations of the imagination, incapacitating men for pure affections or extending their range, making the animal part of our nature more or less predominant. We know, by the intuition of our moral nature, that this predominance is always a degraded, though it is not always an unhappy, condition. We also know that it is a law of our being that powerful and beautiful affections, which had before been latent, are evoked in some particular forms of union, while other forms of union are peculiarly fitted to deaden the affections and to pervert the character.

In these considerations we have ample grounds for maintaining that the lifelong union of one man and of one woman should be the normal or dominant type of

intercourse between the sexes. We can prove that it is on the whole most conducive to the happiness, and also to the moral elevation, of all parties. But beyond this point it would, I conceive, be impossible to advance except by the assistance of a special revelation. It by no means follows that, because this should be the dominant type, it should be the only one, or that the interests of society demand that all connections should be forced into the same die. Connections which were confessedly only for a few years have always subsisted side by side with permanent marriages; and in periods when public opinion, acquiescing in their propriety, inflicts no excommunication on one or both of the partners; when these partners are not living the demoralising and degrading life which accompanies the consciousness of guilt; and when proper provision is made for the children who are born, it would be, I believe, impossible to prove, by the light of simple and unassisted reason, that such connections should be invariably condemned. It is extremely important, both for the happiness and for the moral well-being of men, that lifelong unions should not be effected simply under the imperious prompting of a blind appetite. There are always multitudes who, in the period of their lives when their passions are most strong, are incapable of supporting children in their own social rank, and who would therefore injure society by marrying in it, but are nevertheless perfectly capable of securing an honourable career for their illegitimate children in the lower social sphere to which these would naturally belong. Under the conditions I have mentioned these connections are not injurious, but beneficial, to the weaker partner; they soften the differences of rank; they stimulate social habits, and they do not produce upon character the degrading effect of promiscuous intercourse, or upon society the injurious effects of imprudent marriages, one or other of which will multiply in their absence. In the immense variety of circumstances and characters, cases will always appear in which, on utilitarian grounds, they might seem advisable.

It is necessary to dwell upon such considerations as these, if we would understand the legislation of the pagan Empire or the changes that were effected by Christianity. The legislators of the Empire distinctly recognised these connections,

and made it a main object to authorise, dignify, and regulate them. The unlimited licence of divorce practically included them under the name of marriage, while that name sheltered them from stigma, and prevented many of the gravest evils of unauthorised unions. The word concubine also, which in the Republic had the same signification as among ourselves, represented in the Empire a strictly legal union—an innovation which was chiefly due to Augustus, and was doubtless intended as part of the legislation against celibacy, and also, it may be, as a corrective of the licentious habits that were general. This union was in essentials merely a form of marriage, for he who, having a concubine, took to himself either a wife or another concubine was legally guilty of adultery. Like the commonest form of marriage, it was consummated without any ceremony, and was dissoluble at will. Its peculiarities were that it was contracted between men of patrician rank and freedwomen, who were forbidden by law to intermarry; that the concubine, though her position was perfectly recognised and honourable, did not share the rank of her partner; that she brought no dowry, and that her children followed her rank, and were excluded from the rank and the inheritance of their father.¹

Against these notions Christianity declared a direct and implacable warfare, which was imperfectly reflected in the civil legislation, but appeared unequivocally in the writings of the Fathers, and in most of the decrees of the Councils.² It taught, as a religious dogma, inviolable, inflexible, and independent of all

utilitarian calculations, that all forms of intercourse of the sexes, other than life-long unions, were criminal. By teaching men to regard this doctrine as axiomatic, and therefore inflicting severe social penalties and deep degradation on transient connections, it has profoundly modified even their utilitarian aspect, and has rendered them in most countries furtive and disguised. There is probably no other branch of ethics which has been so largely determined by special dogmatic theology, and there is none which would be so deeply affected by its decay.

As a part of the same movement, the purely civil marriage of the later pagan Empire was gradually replaced by religious marriages. There is a manifest propriety in invoking a divine benediction upon an act which forms so important an epoch in life, and the mingling of a religious ceremony impresses a deeper sense of the solemnity of the contract. The essentially religious and even mystical character imparted by Christianity to marriage rendered the consecration peculiarly natural, but it was only very gradually that it came to be looked upon as absolutely necessary. As I have already noticed, it was long dispensed with in the marriage of slaves; and even in the case of freemen, though generally performed, it was not made compulsory till the tenth century.³ In addition to its primary object of sanctifying marriage, it became in time a powerful instrument in securing the authority of the priesthood, who were able to compel men to submit to the conditions they imposed in the formation of the most important contract of life; and the modern authorisation of civil marriages, by diminishing greatly the power of the Catholic priesthood over domestic life, has been one of the most severe blows ecclesiastical influence has undergone.

The absolute sinfulness of divorce was at the same time strenuously maintained by the Councils, which in this, as in many other points, differed widely from the civil law. Constantine restricted it to three cases of crime on the part of the husband and three on the part of the wife; but the habits of the people were too strong for his enactments, and, after one or two changes in the law, the full latitude of divorce reappeared in the Justinian Code. The Fathers, on the other hand, though

¹ See Troplong, *Influence du Christianisme sur le Droit*, pp. 239-251.

² We find, however, traces of a toleration of the Roman type of concubine in Christianity for some time. Thus, a Council of Toledo decreed: "Si quis habens uxorem fidelis concubinam habeat, non committet. Caterum is qui non habet uxorem et pro uxore concubinam habet, a communione non repellatur, tantum ut unus mulieris, aut uxoris aut concubinæ ut ei placeat, sit conjunctio contentus." (1 *Can.* 17) St. Isidore said: "Christiano non dicam plurimas sed nec duas simul habere licitum est, nisi unam tantum aut uxorem, aut certo loco uxoris, si conjux deest, concubinam." (*Apud Gratianum*, diss. 4. Quoted by Natalis Alexander, *Hist. Eccles. sæc. i.* diss. 29.) Mr. Lea (*Hist. of Sacerdotal Celibacy*, pp. 203-205) has devoted an extremely interesting note to tracing the history of the word "concubine" through the Middle Ages. He shows that even up to the thirteenth century a concubine was not necessarily an abandoned woman. The term was applied to marriages that were real, but not officially recognised. Coleridge notices a remarkable instance of the revival of this custom in German history. (*Notes on English Divines*, ed. 1853, vol. i. p. 221.)

³ Legouvé, p. 199.

they hesitated a little about the case of a divorce which followed an act of adultery on the part of the wife,¹ had no hesitation whatever in pronouncing all other divorces to be criminal, and periods of penitential discipline were imposed upon Christians who availed themselves of the privileges of the civil law.² For many centuries this duality of legislation continued. The barbarian laws restricted divorce by imposing severe fines on those who repudiated their wives. Charlemagne pronounced divorce to be criminal, but did not venture to make it penal, and he practised it himself. On the other hand, the Church threatened with excommunication, and in some cases actually launched its thunders against, those who were guilty of it. It was only in the twelfth century that the victory was definitely achieved, and the civil law, adopting the principle of the canon law, prohibited all divorce.³

I do not propose in the present work to examine how far this total prohibition has been for the happiness or the moral well-being of men. I will simply observe that, though it is now often defended, it was not originally imposed in Christian nations, upon utilitarian grounds, but was based upon the sacramental character of marriage, upon the belief that marriage is the special symbol of the perpetual union of Christ with his Church, and upon a well-known passage in the Gospels. The stringency of the Catholic doctrine, which forbids the dissolution of marriage even in the case of adultery, has been considerably relaxed by modern legislation; and there can, I think, be little doubt that further steps will yet be taken in the same direction; but the vast change that was effected in both practice and theory since the unlimited licence of the pagan Empire must be manifest to all.

It was essential, or at least very important, that a union which was so solemn and so irrevocable should be freely contracted. (The sentiment of the Roman patriots towards the close of the Republic was that marriage should be regarded as a means of providing children for the

State, and should be entered into as a matter of duty with that view; and the laws of Augustus had imposed many disqualifications on those who abstained from it. Both of these inducements to marriage passed away under the influence of Christianity. The popular sentiment disappeared with the decline of civic virtues. The laws were rescinded under the influence of the ascetic enthusiasm, which made men regard the state of celibacy as pre-eminently holy.

There was still one other important condition to be attained by theologians in order to realise their ideal type of marriage. It was to prevent the members of the Church from intermarrying with those whose religious opinions differed from their own. Mixed marriages, it has been truly said, may do more than almost any other influence to assuage the rancour and the asperity of sects, but it must be added that a considerable measure of tolerance must have been already attained before they become possible. In a union in which each partner believes and realises that the other is doomed to an eternity of misery there can be no real happiness, no sympathy, no trust; and a domestic agreement that some of the children should be educated in one religion and some in the other would be impossible when each parent believed it to be an agreement that some children should be doomed to hell.

The domestic unhappiness arising from differences of belief was probably almost or altogether unknown in the world before the introduction of Christianity; for, although differences of opinion may have before existed, the same momentous consequences were not attached to them. It has been the especial bane of periods of great religious change, such as the conversion of the Roman Empire, or the Reformation, or our own day—when far more serious questions than those which agitated the sixteenth century are occupying the attention of a large proportion of thinkers and scholars, and when the deep and widening chasm between the religious opinions of most highly educated men, and of the immense majority of women, is painfully apparent. While a multitude of scientific discoveries, critical and historical researches, and educational reforms have brought thinking men face to face with religious problems of extreme importance, women have been almost absolutely excluded from their

¹ See some curious passages in Troplong, pp 222-223. The Fathers seem to have thought dissolution of marriage was not lawful on account of the adultery of the husband, but that it was not absolutely unlawful, though not commendable, for a husband whose wife had committed adultery to re-marry.

² Some of the great charities of Fabiola were performed as penances, on account of her crime in availing herself of the legislative permission of divorce.

³ Laboulaye, *Recherches sur la Condition civile et politique des Femmes*, pp 152-153.

influence. Their minds are usually by nature less capable than those of men of impartiality and suspense; and the almost complete omission from female education of those studies which most discipline and strengthen the intellect increases the difference; while at the same time it has been usually made a main object to imbue them with a passionate faith in traditional opinions, and to preserve them from all contact with opposing views. But contracted knowledge and imperfect sympathy are not the sole fruits of this education. It has always been the peculiarity of a certain kind of theological teaching that it inverts all the normal principles of judgment, and absolutely destroys intellectual diffidence. On other subjects we find, if not a respect for honest conviction, at least some sense of the amount of knowledge that is requisite to entitle men to express an opinion on grave controversies. A complete ignorance of the subject-matter of a dispute restrains the confidence of dogmatism; and an ignorant person, who is aware that, by much reading and thinking in spheres of which he has himself no knowledge, his educated neighbour has modified or rejected opinions which that ignorant person had been taught, will, at least if he is a man of sense or modesty, abstain from compassionating the benighted condition of his more instructed friend. But on theological questions this has never been so. Unflinching belief being taught as the first of duties, and all doubt being usually stigmatised as criminal or damnable, a state of mind is formed to which we find no parallel in other fields. Many men, and most women—though completely ignorant of the very rudiments of Biblical criticism, historical research, or scientific discoveries, though they have never read a single page, or understood a single proposition, of the writings of those whom they condemn, and have absolutely no rational knowledge either of the arguments by which their faith is defended or of those by which it has been impugned—will nevertheless adjudicate with the utmost confidence upon every polemical question; denounce, hate, pity, or pray for the conversion of all who dissent from what they have been taught; assume, as a matter beyond the faintest possibility of doubt, that the opinions they have received without enquiry must be true, and that the opinions which others have arrived at

by enquiry must be false; and make it a main object of their lives to assail what they call heresy in every way in their power, except by examining the grounds on which it rests. It is probable that the great majority of voices that swell the clamour against every book which is regarded as heretical are the voices of those who would deem it criminal even to open that book, or to enter into any real, searching, and impartial investigation of the subject to which it relates. Innumerable pulpits support this tone of thought, and represent, with a fervid rhetoric well fitted to excite the nerves and imaginations of women, the deplorable condition of all who deviate from a certain type of opinions or of emotions. A blind propagandism or a secret wretchedness penetrates into countless households, poisoning the peace of families, chilling the mutual confidence of husband and wife, adding immeasurably to the difficulties which every searcher into truth has to encounter, and diffusing far and wide intellectual timidity, disingenuousness, and hypocrisy.

These domestic divisions became very apparent in the period of the conversion of the Roman Empire; and a natural desire to guard intact the orthodoxy and zeal of the converts, and to prevent a continual discordance, stimulated the Fathers in their very vehement denunciations of all mixed marriages. We may also trace in these denunciations the outline of a very singular doctrine, which was afterwards suffered to fall into obscurity, but was revived in the eighteenth century in England in a curious and learned work of the Nonjuror Dodwell.¹ The union of Christ and his Church had been represented as a marriage; and this image was not regarded as a mere metaphor or comparison, but as intimating a mysterious unity, which, though not susceptible of any very clear definition, was not on that account the less real. Christians were the "limbs of Christ," and for them to join themselves in marriage with

¹ "A discourse concerning the obligation to marry within the true communion, following from their style (*sic*) of being called a holy seed." This rare discourse is appended to a sermon against mixed marriages by Leslie. (London, 1702.) The reader may find something about Dodwell in Macaulay's *Hist. of England*, ch. xiv; but Macaulay, who does not appear to have known Dodwell's masterpiece—his dissertation *De Paucitate Martyrum*, which is one of the finest specimens of criticism of his time—and who only knew the discourse on marriages by extracts, has, I think, done him considerable injustice.

those who were not of the Christian fold was literally, it was said, a species of adultery or fornication. The intermarriage of the Israelites, the chosen seed of the ancient world, with the Gentiles, had been described in the Old Testament as an act of impurity;¹ and in the opinion of some, at least, of the Fathers, the Christian community occupied towards the unbelievers a position analogous to that which the Jews had occupied towards the Gentiles. St. Cyprian denounced the crime of those "who prostitute the limbs of Christ in marriage with the Gentiles."² Tertullian described the intermarriage as fornication;³ and after the triumph of the Church, the intermarriage of Jews and Christians was made a capital offence, and was stigmatised by the law as adultery.⁴ The civil law did not prohibit the orthodox from intermarrying with heretics, but many councils in strong terms denounced such marriages as criminal.

The extreme sanctity attributed to virginity, the absolute condemnation of all forms of sexual connection other than marriage, and the formation and gradual realisation of the Christian conception of marriage as a permanent union of a man and woman of the same religious opinions, consecrated by solemn religious services, carrying with it a deep religious significance, and dissoluble only by death, were the most obvious signs of Christian influence in the sphere of ethics we are examining. Another very important result of the new religion was to raise to a far greater honour than they had previously possessed, the qualities in which women peculiarly excel.

There are few more curious subjects of enquiry than the distinctive differences between the sexes, and the manner in which those differences have affected the ideal types of different ages, nations, philosophies, and religions. Physically, men have the indisputable superiority in strength, and women in beauty. Intellectually, a certain inferiority of the female sex can hardly be denied, when we

remember how almost exclusively the foremost places in every department of science, literature, and art have been occupied by men, how infinitesimally small is the number of women who have shown in any form the very highest order of genius, how many of the greatest men have achieved their greatness in defiance of the most adverse circumstances, and how completely women have failed in obtaining the first position, even in music or painting, for the cultivation of which their circumstances would appear most propitious. It is as impossible to find a female Raphael, or a female Handel, as a female Shakespeare or Newton. Women are intellectually more desultory and volatile than men; they are more occupied with particular instances than with general principles; they judge rather by intuitive perceptions than by deliberate reasoning or past experience. They are, however, usually superior to men in nimbleness and rapidity of thought, and in the gift of tact or the power of seizing speedily and faithfully the finer inflections of feeling, and they have therefore often attained very great eminence in conversation, as letter-writers, as actresses, and as novelists.

Morally, the general superiority of women over men is, I think, unquestionable. If we take the somewhat coarse and inadequate criterion of police statistics, we find that, while the male and female populations are nearly the same in number, the crimes committed by men are usually rather more than five times as numerous as those committed by women;⁵ and although it may be justly observed that men, as the stronger sex, and the sex upon whom the burden of supporting the family is thrown, have more temptations than women, it must be remembered, on the other hand, that extreme poverty which verges upon starvation is most common among women, whose means of livelihood are most restricted, and whose earnings are smallest and most precarious. Self-sacrifice is the

¹ Dodwell relies mainly upon this fact, and especially upon Ezra's having treated these marriages as essentially null.

² "Iungere cum infidelibus vinculum matrimonii, prostituere gentilibus membra Christi." (Cyprian, *De lapsis*.)

³ "Hæc cum ita sint, fideles Gentilium matrimonia subeuntes stupri reos esse constat, et arcendos ab omni communicatione fraternitatis" (Tert. *Ad Uxor.* ii. 3.)

⁴ See on this law, and on the many councils which condemned the marriage of orthodox with heretics, Bingham, *Antiq.* xlii. 2, §§ 1-2.

⁵ Many curious statistics illustrating this fact are given by M. Bonneville de Marsangy—a Portuguese writer who was counsellor of the Imperial Court at Paris—in his *Étude sur la Moralité comparée de la Femme et de l'Homme*. (Paris, 1862.) The writer would have done better if he had not maintained, in lawyer fashion, that the statistics of crime are absolutely decisive on the question of the comparative morality of the sexes, and also if he had not thought it due to his official position to talk in a rather grotesque strain about the regeneration and glorification of the sex in the person of the Empress Eugénie.

most conspicuous element of a virtuous and religious character, and it is certainly far less common among men than among women, whose whole lives are usually spent in yielding to the will and consulting the pleasures of another. There are two great departments of virtue: the impulsive, or that which springs spontaneously from the emotions; and the deliberative, or that which is performed in obedience to the sense of duty; and in both of these I imagine women are superior to men. Their sensibility is greater, they are more chaste both in thought and act, more tender to the erring, more compassionate to the suffering, more affectionate to all about them. On the other hand, those who have traced the course of the wives of the poor, and of many who, though in narrow circumstances, can hardly be called poor, will probably admit that in no other class do we so often find entire lives spent in daily persistent self-denial, in the patient endurance of countless trials, in the ceaseless and deliberate sacrifice of their own enjoyments to the well-being or the prospects of others. Women, however, though less prone than men to intemperance and brutality, are in general more addicted to the petty forms of vanity, jealousy, spitefulness, and ambition, and they are also inferior to men in active courage. In the courage of endurance they are commonly superior; but their passive courage is not so much fortitude which bears and defies, as resignation which bears and bends. In the ethics of intellect they are decidedly inferior. To repeat an expression I have already employed, women very rarely love truth, though they love passionately what they call "the truth," or opinions they have received from others, and hate vehemently those who differ from them. They are little capable of impartiality or of doubt; their thinking is chiefly a mode of feeling; though very generous in their acts, they are rarely generous in their opinions or in their judgments. They persuade rather than convince, and value belief rather as a source of consolation than as a faithful expression of the reality of things. They are less capable than men of perceiving qualifying circumstances, of admitting the existence of elements of good in systems to which they are opposed, of distinguishing the personal character of an opponent from the opinions he maintains. Men lean most to justice and

women to mercy. Men excel in energy, self-reliance, perseverance, and magnanimity; women in humility, gentleness, modesty, and endurance. The realising imagination which causes us to pity and to love is more sensitive in women than in men, and it is especially more capable of dwelling on the unseen. Their religious or devotional realisations are incontestably more vivid; and it is probable that, while a father is most moved by the death of a child in his presence, a mother generally feels most the death of a child in some distant land. But, though more intense, the sympathies of women are commonly less wide than those of men. Their imaginations individualise more; their affections are, in consequence, concentrated rather on leaders than on causes; and if they care for a great cause, it is generally because it is represented by a great man, or connected with someone whom they love. In politics, their enthusiasm is more naturally loyalty than patriotism. In history, they are even more inclined than men to dwell exclusively upon biographical incidents or characteristics as distinguished from the march of general causes. In benevolence, they excel in charity, which alleviates individual suffering, rather than in philanthropy, which deals with large masses and is more frequently employed in preventing than in allaying calamity.

It was a remark of Winckelmann that "the supreme beauty of Greek art is rather male than female"; and the justice of this remark has been amply corroborated by the greater knowledge we have of late years attained of the works of the Phidian period, in which art achieved its highest perfection, and in which, at the same time, force and freedom, and masculine grandeur, were its pre-eminent characteristics. A similar observation may be made of the moral ideal of which ancient art was simply the expression. In antiquity the virtues that were most admired were almost exclusively those which are distinctively masculine. Courage, self-assertion, magnanimity, and, above all, patriotism, were the leading features of the ideal type; and chastity, modesty, and charity, the gentler and the domestic virtues, which are especially feminine, were greatly under-valued. With the single exception of conjugal fidelity, none of the virtues that were very highly prized were virtues distinctively or pre-eminently feminine. With

this exception, nearly all the most illustrious women of antiquity were illustrious chiefly because they overcame the natural conditions of their sex. It is a characteristic fact that the favourite female ideal of the artists appears to have been the Amazon.¹ We may admire the Spartan mother, and the mother of the Gracchi, repressing every sign of grief when their children were sacrificed upon the altar of their country; we may wonder at the majestic courage of a Porcia and an Arria; but we extol them chiefly because, being women, they emancipated themselves from the frailty of their sex, and displayed an heroic fortitude worthy of the strongest and the bravest of men. We may bestow an equal admiration upon the noble devotion and charity of a St. Elizabeth of Hungary, or of a Mrs. Fry, but we do not admire them because they displayed these virtues, although they were women, for we feel that their virtues were of the kind which the female nature is most fitted to produce. The change from the heroic to the saintly ideal, from the ideal of paganism to the ideal of Christianity, was a change from a type which was essentially male to one which was essentially feminine. Of all the great schools of philosophy, no other reflected so faithfully the Roman conception of moral excellence as Stoicism, and the greatest Roman exponent of Stoicism summed up its character in a single sentence when he pronounced it to be beyond all other sects the most emphatically masculine.² On the other hand, an ideal type in which meekness, gentleness, patience, humility, faith, and love are the most prominent features, is not naturally male, but female. A reason probably deeper than the historical ones which are commonly alleged why sculpture has always been peculiarly pagan and painting peculiarly Christian may be found in the fact that sculpture is especially suited to represent male beauty, or the beauty of strength, and painting female beauty, or the beauty of softness; and that pagan sentiment was chiefly a glorification of the masculine qualities of strength, and courage, and conscious virtue, while Christian sentiment is chiefly a glorification of the feminine qualities of gentleness,

humility, and love.³ The painters whom the religious feeling of Christendom has recognised as the most faithful exponents of Christian sentiment have always been those who infused a large measure of feminine beauty even into their male characters; and we never, or scarcely ever, find that the same artist has been conspicuously successful in delineating both Christian and pagan types. Michael Angelo, whose genius loved to expatiate on the sublimity of strength and defiance, failed signally in his representations of the Christian ideal; and Perugino was equally unsuccessful when he sought to portray the features of the heroes of antiquity.⁴ The position that was gradually assigned to the Virgin as the female ideal in the belief and the devotion of Christendom was a consecration or an expression of the new value that was attached to the feminine virtues.

The general superiority of women to men in the strength of their religious emotions, and their natural attraction to a religion which made personal attachment to its Founder its central duty, and which imparted an unprecedented dignity and afforded an unprecedented scope to their characteristic virtues, account for the very conspicuous position that female influence assumed in the great work of the conversion of the Roman Empire. In no other important movement of thought was it so powerful or so acknowledged. In the ages of persecution female figures occupy many of the foremost places in the ranks of martyrdom, and pagan and Christian writers alike attest the alacrity with which women flocked to the Church, and the influence they exercised in its favour over the male members of their families. The mothers of St. Augustine, St. Chrysostom, St. Basil, St. Gregory Nazianzen, and Theodoret, had all a leading part in the conversion of their sons. St. Helena, the mother of Constantine, Flacilla, the wife of Theodosius the Great, St. Pulcheria, the sister of Theodosius the Younger, and Placidia, the mother of Valentinian III., were among the most

¹ See Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* xxxiv. 19.

² "Tantum inter Stoicos, Serene, et ceteros sapientiam profectos interesse, quantum inter feminas et viros non immerito dixerimus" (*De Const. Sapientis*, cap. I.)

³ This is well illustrated, on the one side, by the most repulsive representations of Christ, by Michael Angelo, in the great fresco in the Sistine Chapel (so inferior to the Christ of Orgagna, at Pisa, from which it was partly imitated), and in marble in the Minerva Church at Rome; and, on the other side, by the frescoes of Perugino, at Perugia, representing the great sages of paganism. The figure of Cato, in the latter, almost approaches, as well as I remember, the type of St. John.

conspicuous defenders of the faith. In the heretical sects the same zeal was manifested, and Arius, Priscillian, and Montanus were all supported by troops of zealous female devotees. In the career of asceticism women took a part little, if at all, inferior to men, while in the organisation of the great work of charity they were pre-eminent. For no other field of active labour are women so admirably suited as for this; and although we may trace from the earliest period, in many creeds and ages, individual instances of their influence in allaying the sufferings of the distressed,¹ it may be truly said that their instinct and genius of charity had never before the dawn of Christianity obtained full scope for action. Fabiola, Paula, Melania, and a host of other noble ladies devoted their time and fortunes mainly to founding and extending vast institutions of charity, some of them of a kind before unknown in the world. The Empress Flacilla was accustomed to tend with her own hands the sick in the hospitals,² and a readiness to discharge such offices was deemed the first duty of a Christian wife.³ From age to age the impulse thus communicated has been felt. There has been no period, however corrupt, there has been no Church, however superstitious, that has not been adorned by many Christian women devoting their entire lives to assuaging the sufferings of men; and the mission of charity thus instituted has not been more efficacious in diminishing

the sum of human wretchedness than in promoting the moral dignity of those by whom it was conducted.

Among the Collyridian heretics women were admitted to the priesthood. Among the orthodox, although this honour was not bestowed upon them, they received a religious consecration, and discharged some minor ecclesiastical functions under the name of deaconesses.⁴ This order may be traced to the Apostolic period.⁵ It consisted of elderly virgins, who were set apart by a formal ordination, and were employed in assisting as catechists and attendants at the baptism of women, in visiting the sick, ministering to martyrs in prison, preserving order in the congregations, and accompanying and presenting women who desired an interview with the bishop. It would appear, from the evidence of some councils, that abuses gradually crept into this institution, and the deaconesses at last faded into simple nuns; but they were still in existence in the East in the twelfth century. Besides these, widows, when they had been but once married, were treated with peculiar honour, and were made the special recipients of the charity of the Church. Women advanced in years who, either from their single life or from bereavement, have been left without any male protector in the world, have always been peculiarly deserving of commiseration. With less strength, and commonly with less means and less knowledge of the world than men, they are liable to contract certain peculiarities of mind and manner to which an excessive amount of ridicule has been attached, and age in most cases furnishes them with very little to compensate for the charms of which it has deprived them. The weight and dignity of matured wisdom, which make the old age of one sex so venerable, are more rarely found in that of the other; and even physical beauty is more frequently the characteristic of an old man than of an old woman. The Church laboured steadily to cast a halo of reverence around this period of woman's life, and its religious exercises have done very much to console and to occupy it.

In accordance with these ideas, the

¹ In that fine description of a virtuous woman which is ascribed to the mother of King Lemuel, we read "She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy." (Proverbs xxxi. 20.) I have already quoted from Xenophon the beautiful description of the Greek wife tending her sick slaves. So, too, Euripides represents the slaves of Alcestis gathering with tears around the bed of their dying mistress, who, even then, found some kind word for each, and, when she died, lamenting her as their second mother (Eurip. *Alcestis*). In the servile war which desolated Sicily at the time of the Punic Wars, we find a touching trait of the same kind. The revolt was provoked by the cruelties of a rich man, named Damophilus, and his wife, who were massacred with circumstances of great atrocity, but the slaves preserved their daughter entirely unharmed, for she had always made it her business to console them in their sorrow, and she had won the love of all. (Diodor. Sic. *Frag.* xxiv.) So, too, Marcia, the wife of Cato, used to suckle her young slaves from her breast (Plut. *Marc. Cato*). I may add the well-known sentiment which Virgil puts in the mouth of Dido: "Haud ignara mali miseris succurrere disco." There are, doubtless, many other touches of the same kind in ancient literature, some of which may occur to my readers.

² Theodoret, v. 19.

³ See the beautiful description of the functions of a Christian woman in the second book of Tertullian, *Ad Uxorem*.

⁴ See, upon the deaconesses, Bingham's *Christian Antiquities*, book ii. ch. 22, and Ludlow's *Woman's Work in the Church*. The latter author argues elaborately that the "widows" were not the same as the deaconesses.

⁵ Phœbe (Rom. xvi. 1) is described as a *διάκονος*.

Christian legislators contributed largely to improve the legal position of widows in respect to property;¹ and Justinian gave mothers the guardianship of their children, destroying the pagan rule that guardianship could only be legally exercised by men.² The usual subservience of the sex to ecclesiastical influence, the numerous instances of rich widows devoting their fortunes, and mothers their sons, to the Church, had, no doubt, some influence in securing the advocacy of the clergy; but these measures had a manifest importance in elevating the position of women, who have had in Christian lands a great, though not I think altogether a beneficial, influence in the early education of their sons.

Independently of all legal enactments, the simple change of the ideal type, by bringing specially feminine virtues into the forefront, was sufficient to elevate and ennoble the sex. The commanding position of the mediæval abbesses, the great number of female saints, and especially the reverence bestowed upon the Virgin, had a similar effect. It is remarkable that the Jews, who of the three great nations of antiquity certainly produced in history and poetry the smallest number of illustrious women, should have furnished the world with its supreme female ideal; and it is also a striking illustration of the qualities which prove most attractive in woman that one of whom we know nothing except her gentleness and her sorrow should have exercised a magnetic power upon the world incomparably greater than was exercised by the most majestic female patriots of paganism. Whatever may be thought of its theological propriety, there can be little doubt that the Catholic reverence for the Virgin has done much to elevate and purify the ideal of woman and to sorten the manners of men. It has had an influence which the worship of the pagan goddesses could never possess, for these had been almost destitute of moral beauty, and especially

of that kind of moral beauty which is peculiarly feminine. It supplied in a great measure the redeeming and ennobling element in that strange amalgam of religious, licentious, and military feeling which was formed around women in the age of chivalry, and which no succeeding change of habit or belief has wholly destroyed.

It can hardly, I think, be questioned that in the great religious convulsions of the sixteenth century the feminine type followed Catholicism, while Protestantism inclined more to the masculine type. Catholicism alone retained the Virgin-worship, which at once reflected and sustained the first. The skill with which it acts upon the emotions by music and painting and solemn architecture and imposing pageantry, its tendency to appeal to the imagination rather than to the reason, and to foster modes of feeling rather than modes of thought; its assertion of absolute and infallible certainty; above all, the manner in which it teaches its votary to throw himself perpetually on authority, all tended in the same direction. It is the part of a woman to lean; it is the part of a man to stand. A religion which prescribes to the distracted mind unreasoning faith in an infallible Church, and to the troubled conscience an implicit trust in an absolving priesthood, has ever had an especial attraction to a feminine mind. A religion which recognises no authority between man and his Creator, which asserts at once the dignity and the duty of private judgment, and which, while deepening immeasurably the sense of individual responsibility, denudes religion of meretricious ornaments and of most æsthetic aids, is pre-eminently a religion of men. Puritanism is the most masculine form that Christianity has yet assumed. Its most illustrious teachers differed from the Catholic saints as much in the moral type they displayed as in the system of doctrines they held. Catholicism commonly softens, while Protestantism strengthens, the character; but the softness of the first often degenerates into weakness, and the strength of the second into hardness. Sincerely Catholic nations are distinguished for their reverence, for their habitual and vivid perceptions of religious things, for the warmth of their emotions, for a certain amiability of disposition, and a certain natural courtesy and refinement of manner that are inexpressibly winning.

¹ A very able writer, who takes on the whole an unfavourable view of the influence of Christianity on legislation, says: "The provision for the widow was attributable to the exertions of the Church, which never relaxed its solicitude for the interests of wives surviving their husbands, winning, perhaps, one of the most arduous of its triumphs when, after exacting for two or three centuries an express promise from the husband at marriage to endow his wife, it at last succeeded in engraving the principle of dower on the customary law of all Western Europe." (*Maine's Ancient Law*, p. 224.)

² See Troplong, *Influence du Christianisme sur le Droit*, pp. 308-310.

Sincerely Protestant nations are distinguished for their love of truth, for their firm sense of duty, for the strength and the dignity of their character. Loyalty and humility, which are especially feminine, flourish chiefly in the first; liberty and self-assertion in the second. The first are most prone to superstition, and the second to fanaticism. Protestantism, by purifying and dignifying marriage, conferred a great benefit upon women; but it must be owned that neither in its ideal type, nor in the general tenour of its doctrines or devotions, is it as congenial to their nature as the religion it superseded.

Its complete suppression of the conventual system was also, I think, very far from a benefit to women or to the world. It would be impossible to conceive any institution more needed than one which would furnish a shelter for the many women who, from poverty, or domestic unhappiness, or other causes, find themselves cast alone and unprotected into the battle of life, which would secure them from the temptations to gross vice, and from the extremities of suffering, and would convert them into agents of active, organised, and intelligent charity. Such an institution would be almost free from the objections that may justly be urged against monasteries, which withdraw strong men from manual labour, and it would largely mitigate the difficulty of providing labour and means of livelihood for single women, which is one of the most pressing, in our own day one of the most appalling, of social problems. Most unhappily for mankind, this noble conception was from the first perverted. Institutions that might have had an incalculable philanthropic value were based upon the principle of asceticism, which makes the sacrifice, not the promotion, of earthly happiness its aim; and binding vows produced much misery and not a little vice. The convent became the perpetual prison of the daughter whom a father was disinclined to endow, or of young girls who, under the impulse of a transient enthusiasm, or of a transient sorrow, took a step which they never could retrace; and useless penances and contemptible superstitions wasted the energies that might have been most beneficially employed. Still, it is very doubtful whether, even in the most degraded period, the convents did not prevent more misery than they inflicted,

and in the Sisters of Charity the religious orders of Catholicism have produced one of the most perfect of all the types of womanhood. There is, as I conceive, no fact in modern history more deeply to be deplored than that the Reformers, who in matters of doctrinal innovations were often so timid, should have levelled to the dust, instead of attempting to regenerate, the whole conventual system of Catholicism.

The course of these observations has led me to transgress the limits assigned to this history. It has been, however, my object through this entire work to exhibit not only the nature, but also the significance of the moral facts I have recorded, by showing how they have affected the subsequent changes of society. I will conclude this chapter, and this work, by observing that of all the departments of ethics the questions concerning the relations of the sexes and the proper position of women are those upon the future of which there rests the greatest uncertainty.

History tells us that, as civilisation advances, the charity of men becomes at once warmer and more expansive, their habitual conduct both more gentle and more temperate, and their love of truth more sincere; but it also warns us that in periods of great intellectual enlightenment, and of great social refinement, the relations of the sexes have often been most anarchical. It is impossible to deny that the form which these relations at present assume has been very largely affected by special religious teaching; which, for good or for ill, is rapidly waning in the sphere of government, and also that certain recent revolutions in economical opinion and industrial enterprise have a most profound bearing upon the subject. The belief that a rapid increase of population is always eminently beneficial, which was long accepted as an axiom by both statesmen and moralists, and was made the basis of a large part of the legislation of the first and of the decisions of the second, has now been replaced by the directly opposite doctrine, that the very highest interest of society is not to stimulate but to restrain multiplication, diminishing the number of marriages and of children. In consequence of this belief, and of the many factitious wants that accompany a luxurious civilisation, a very large and increasing proportion of women are left to make their way in life without any male protector,

and the difficulties they have to encounter through physical weakness have been most unnaturally and most fearfully aggravated by laws and customs which, resting on the old assumption that every woman should be a wife, habitually deprive them of the pecuniary and educational advantages of men, exclude them absolutely from very many of the employments in which they might earn a subsistence, encumber their course in others by a heartless ridicule or by a steady disapprobation, and consign, in consequence, many thousands to the most extreme and agonising poverty, and perhaps a still larger number to the paths of vice. At the same time a momentous revolution, the effects of which can as yet be but imperfectly descried, has taken place in the chief spheres of female industry that remain. The progress of machinery has destroyed its domestic character. The distaff has fallen from the hand. The needle is being rapidly superseded, and the work which, from the days of Homer to the present [nineteenth] century, was accomplished in the centre of the family, has been transferred to the crowded manufactory.*

* The results of this change have been treated by

The probable consequences of these things are among the most important questions that can occupy the moralist or the philanthropist, but they do not fall within the province of the historian. That the pursuits and education of women will be considerably altered, that these alterations will bring with them some modifications of the type of character, and that the prevailing moral notions concerning the relations of the sexes will be subjected in many quarters to a severe and hostile criticism, may safely be predicted. Many wild theories will doubtless be propounded. Some real ethical changes may perhaps be effected, but these, if I mistake not, can only be within definite and narrow limits. He who will seriously reflect upon our clear perceptions of the difference between purity and impurity, upon the laws that govern our affections, and upon the interests of the children who are born, may easily convince himself that in this, as in all other spheres, there are certain eternal moral landmarks which never can be removed.

Miss Parkes, in her truly admirable little book called *Essays on Woman's Work*, better than by any other writer with whom I am acquainted.

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